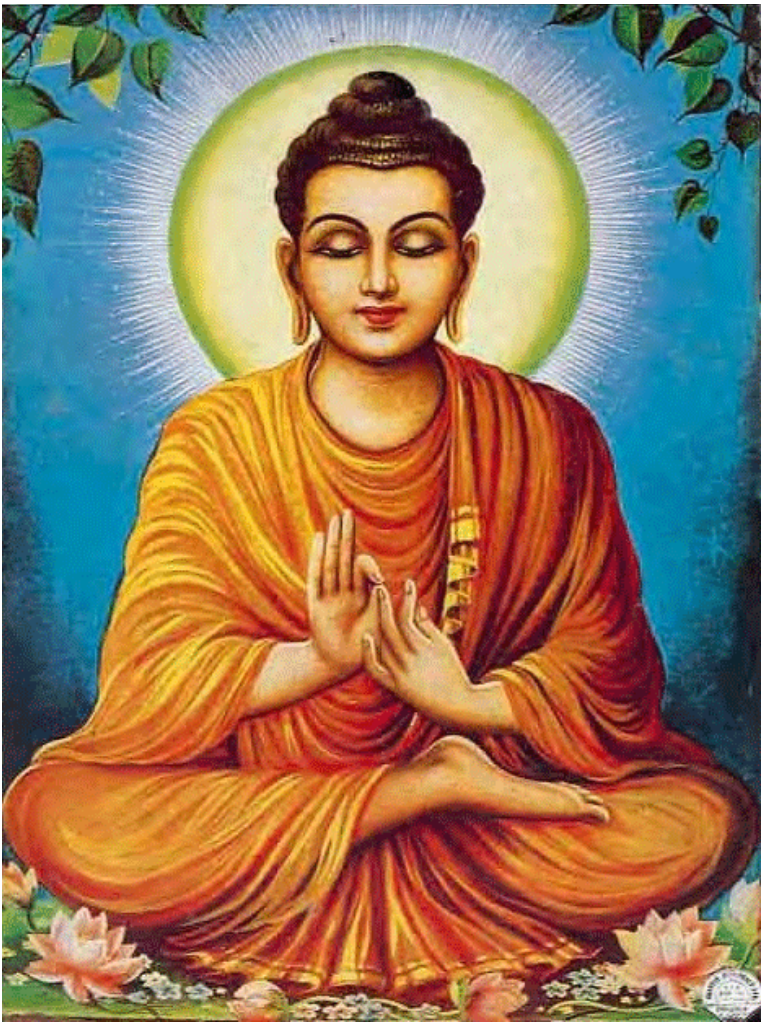
FUNDAMENTAL VIEW



FUNDAMENTAL VIEW

Ten Talks on the Pali Canon

Revised Third Edition

ALEXANDER DUNCAN

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For Bhikkhu Bodhi

"It is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition" – Gadamer, Truth and Method *(1960)*

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Preface

In 2013 I was invited by the Buddha Center to present a series of ten talks on the Pali Canon based on my research and thinking to date. I presented these talks between June and August 2013 and again between September and November. After I became the spiritual director of the Universal Buddha Centre, I presented a comprehensive revision of these talks between July and September 2024, revised in 2025, which became the basis of this book. My fundamental goal has been to present a comprehensive, unbiased, and thorough philosophical study from a universal and non-sectarian point of view. These talks seek to present an overview of the true teachings of the Pali tradition from an authentic dharma perspective in English.

Technical Note

To further the goal of thinking about Buddhist philosophy in our own tongue, as the Buddha instructed us to do, I have generally preferred English terms. I have also added a glossary of Pali terms at the end of the book for convenient cross-reference, followed by a short bibliography of suggested additional reading for further study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who attended the Universal Buddha Centre for the opportunity to present the talks on which this book is based, and to thank them, too numerous to name, whose bright and insightful questions helped me make them better. In particular, I would like to thank Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche and the students and members of

Nalandabodhi Toronto, for the original idea that inspired me to prepare these talks to address some of the pithy questions being raised in Nalandabodhi's "Introduction to Buddhism" course. I would of course like to thank Bhikkhu Bodhi for his exceptional anthology of the Pali discourses, *In the Buddha's Words.* I would like to thank Dr. Robert Thurman for encouraging me in this work. I would also like to thank Dave Hostetter for his wise counsel and editorial advice, without whom this book would not be as good as it is. Finally, I would like to thank Steve Hostetter, who has always been a wise and good friend to me through thick and thin.

The Way of the Worldling

Preamble

During the first rainy season after the Buddha passed, the Buddhist community met to recite the teachings. This was about three months after the Buddha's passing. The rainy season in India begins at the end of June. This would place the Buddha's death in late March. According to the Maha Parinibbana Sutta, the Buddha passed while lying between two sal trees. The sal is a common tree of northeast India – tall, with large leathery leaves and yellowish flowers. The discourse says that the sal flowered early. The flowers normally appear at the beginning of summer. This is March to April in northeast India, so the chronology fits perfectly. It seems that the Buddha died in late winter.

According to tradition, the First Buddhist Council formally laid down the rules governing the organization of the Buddhist community, called the Vinaya. Ananda then recited the teachings of the Buddha. Ananda was the Buddha's personal attendant for the last twenty-five years of his life. Ananda was also famous for his memory in an oral culture where memorization was the main means of passing on tradition. Therefore, every discourse begins with the words, 'Thus have I heard." Each discourse included the place, time, participants, and a story explaining the situation and what the Buddha did and said. Ananda's recitation became the basis of the discourses of the Pali Canon. The second part of the canon, called the Sutta Pitaka, collects these accounts together. 'Sutta Pitaka' means a collection of traditional stories. This process took seven months.

There is no reason to doubt this account. Ancient India was still an oral culture. For a thousand years a similar process of memorization and recitation passed down the Vedas. They continued to recite them for another thousand years before finally writing them down.

The community passed the discourses down in this way until the 1st century BCE. This was about the same time that the earliest Mahayana sutras began to appear. The Sri Lankan monastics wrote the discourses on palm leaves during the Fourth Buddhist Council. The Buddha probably passed about 400 BCE. As little as 350 years had passed between the first and fourth councils – as few as three complete human lifespans. During this time, the Pali Canon acquired additional material besides the Vinaya and the discourses. This material included accounts of lives in heavens and hells; poems written by monks and nuns; many mythological birth stories of the Buddha and various associates, drawn largely from Indian folklore; fantastic accounts of previous buddhas and historical ages; and extensive commentaries and interpretations, including the Abhidhamma – the word means 'metaphysics,' and summarizes the Theravada interpretation of the discourses.

The Abhidhamma became the third major part of the Pali Canon and the basis of the Theravada sect that survives today. The Theravadins were not the only early Buddhist school, but, until recently, only their version of the canon remained intact, due to their famous conservatism. Bits and pieces of other canons from the same period survived in Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Chinese translations. These translations are like the discourses preserved in the Pali Canon. Most scholars say the discourses are pre-sectarian. The compositions of the Abhidharmas of the various schools were sectarian in intention. The Sarvastivadin Abhidharma differs from the Theravada Abhidhamma. This disproves the claim that the Theravada represents the sole authentic lineage of the Buddha.

Of course, the monastics continuously consolidated the discourses over time. As a result, stock phrases and rote lists recur all through the canon as an aid to memorization. Various elaborations addressed the doctrinal disputes that continued to challenge the unity of the Buddhist community. This conservatism also worked to maintain the integrity of the texts. What one sees today combines these two opposite tendencies – one obsessed with preservation, the other with codification. One sees a similar phenomenon in the early formation of the Christian New Testament.

Modern scholars address the problem of assessing the Pali Canon in two ways. The linguistic school, still popular with some academics, studies the Pali language of the Pali Canon and tries to ferret out the original doctrines of the Buddha by identifying the oldest layers or strata of the Pali Canon through formal linguistic analysis. Similarly, some Christian scholars have tried to identify the original sayings of Jesus. However, whereas the earliest Christian writings are few, the Pali Canon consists of about forty volumes of material. Moreover, the Pali Canon is highly repetitive.

Linguistic analysis can only go so far, however. This line of inquiry is effectively exhausted. Important for translators and historians, it is less interesting to those who seek to understand the teaching in its totality. Of course, this is why they preserved the discourses in the first place. Instead, an increasing number of scholars are looking at the Pali Canon with fresh eyes.

Trying to ferret out the "original words" of the Buddha from this mass of texts is like picking individual threads out of a tapestry. It destroys the picture. The inclusive approach is to look at the tapestry as a whole. Of special interest are the five thousand plus discourses preserved in the Sutta Pitaka. The Vinaya is also important, although there are at least six different Vinaya versions. The new scholars search for the large patterns of meaning that emerge out of the whole, not merely a handful of hypothesized "original doctrines." The core doctrines are only the axioms or building blocks. The

results of this comprehensive approach have been incredibly rich and profound. Because one has so much material to work with, one can be confident that this approach accurately reflects the essential meaning of the philosophy of the Buddha, even if the discourses do not incorporate his exact words. Many aspects of his philosophy only become clear when one compares the texts from this higher point of view. Looked at in isolation, many meanings disappear. It is the old adage of the forest and the trees.

One conclusion that has emerged from this higher criticism is the realization that the Pali Canon is not just a Theravada or even a Hinayana collection. Rather, all Buddhist schools have drawn their inspiration from this original pre-sectarian matrix. Few people believe that the Mahayana sutras are actual accounts of the sayings and doings of the historical Buddha. Nevertheless, one finds all their essential axioms in the Pali Canon if one chooses to look at it philosophically and not merely from a narrow historical perspective. The Buddha said that he was restoring a primordial doctrine taught by the original seers of the Indian Vedic tradition and their predecessors. The Buddha declared his teaching to be part of a much older and larger tradition, the spiritual fountainhead of humanity. Today one would call this the perennial philosophy. It is the basis of all wisdom traditions.

The division between Hinayana, so-called, and Mahayana is not about historical authenticity. It is about what the teaching of the Buddha means. This is not merely reducible to what the Buddha did and said. The teaching is much more than a system of rules and beliefs. The teaching is the living truth and meaning of reality itself. It is the essential discovery of all of those who seek the spiritual life. As such, it is universal and must include all religions, civilizations, and cultures; science; art; mysticism; and all life and sentience itself, everywhere in the universe and beyond. If one does not understand the teaching in this way, if one reduces it merely to a system of rules, doctrines, or events frozen in the past, one has not even begun to understand the teaching – one has

merely constructed a simulacrum, or, worse, a religion. This is clearly not what the Buddha wanted or intended for the Buddhist community, either in his time or our own.

1

The Human Condition

Traditional Indian philosophy begins with metaphysics. The Buddha, however, began with direct observation of the mind. In the West, the early 20th century pioneered this approach to philosophy. The Buddha's approach to philosophy was a radical break with Indian tradition. It anticipated Husserl's phenomenology, existentialism, and process philosophy by more than 2,000 years.

Suffering

The essential insight of the Buddha is that the same suffering, without regard to social station or wealth, afflicts everyone. This "dis-ease" is ageing and death. Even the liberated arhant, the Pali word for 'worthy,' is subject to this affliction. The cause of ageing and death is birth. Ageing and death are the universal experience of humanity. The Buddha saw that there is no difference between the decay to which a constructed object like a chariot is subject and the body. That they decay the same is a universal law. The universal tendency to disorder interweaves with time. As time passes, disorder increases and objects decay. Even the universe is subject to entropy.

However, entropy is not a problem for chariots or even animals. They have little or no awareness of their own or others' death. For human beings, however, aware of our mortality, this becomes a problem. The realization of the

impermanence of things grips at our heartstrings and destroys our capacity for living. Either one immerses oneself in pleasure or the quest for power or money, one uses alcohol or drugs to try to dull one's consciousness to approximate the animal state, or one deludes oneself with illusory promises of salvation. If one faces the fact of death squarely, each one will see that it destroys one's capacity for pleasure, one's will and one's effectiveness and thus makes continued living impossible. This is the reason for renunciation.

The situation described above would appear to be insoluble (existentialism). According to the Buddha, there is a solution: dharma. According to the Buddha, "the Dhamma of the good does not decay. So the good proclaim along with the good." Therefore, one must find out more about this teaching. It is a life raft in a sea of suffering.

Dharma

It is not simple to translate the word dharma. It comes from the Vedic words dharma and dharman. These roots are related to karma, from the root DHR, meaning 'to hold to support; that which forms a foundation and upholds; constitution.' In use, dharma alludes primarily to the universal order of things in their most intimate and ultimate nature. Thus, dharma is reality – being in itself.

Second, dharma refers to the mind that perceives reality. The dharma-mind formulates dharma as knowledge and philosophy. Dharma is the true knowledge of things. Dharma refers to the knower, the knowledge in which knowing expresses itself, and the known. Thus, dharma also means 'truth.' It is the truth of things as they are. Dharma is not merely the philosophy of the Buddha. Rather, dharma is the objective truth that the Buddha discovered. That the Buddha's philosophy expresses this truth is the premise of Buddhism.

Finally, it refers to the right, righteousness, moral quality or action, i.e., ethics. Ethics follows logically from the knowledge of the real. If the goal of ethics is the maximization

of the good – however defined – it must be based on the knowledge of the real. The discerning person can rationally apprehend and define the course of action that leads to the good. The Buddha declares in a sermon that everything involves change but also says that something does not decay: the dharma. Impermanence itself, while universal, is also relative. Therefore, change itself posits changelessness. As the great Chinese philosopher, Laozi, put it, opposites interdepend (Tao Te Ching, 2). Laozi was a close contemporary of the Buddha and the author of the famous Tao Te Ching, the Classic of the Way and Its Virtue. The Buddha states that the cause of impermanence is birth. Birth posits death. Death posits birth. This is the cycle of rebirth. Therefore, the dharma does not decay because it is not born. Only one thing is not born. That is reality, the totality, the whole, the absolute, the ultimate, the All – whichever term one prefers, the absolute cannot be subject to decay; if it were, what would it decay into? – then that would become fundamental. This is why the real in Indian philosophy is always permanent and changeless, the ultimate simplicity, Laozi's "uncarved block." We do not need to define it right now; we just need to know that it exists (in some sense), that it is real. This is what dharma refers to. Thus, like a finger pointing at the moon, the Buddha progressed from the immediacy of human experience to ultimate understanding.

Four Great Mountains

The Buddha compares the truth of human life to four great mountains bearing down on a powerful king and his kingdom. Despite all his power, he cannot stop it. The mountains will come crashing down and destroy everything. Nothing can escape. This appears to be nihilism. However, it is not, because, out of this utter annihilation, the teaching is indestructible. Thus, he concludes that the pursuit of the teaching is the only proper purpose of the rare and precious thing called human life.

Animals do not have the capacity to pursue the teaching because animals are barely conscious and driven by automatic impulses, immersed in a sea of suffering from which they cannot escape. This is even truer of ghosts and hell-beings. On the other hand, the divine beings of light, commonly badly translated 'gods' or 'deities,' and even those on the human plane who are rich and powerful enough, can pursue the teaching but do not do so, mostly because of self-satisfaction. Self-satisfaction is entirely illusory. Even the richest and most powerful people will suffer, get sick, and die, as will their children and their children's children, in an ever-recurring cycle. All the wealth that they have accumulated and everything that they have built will turn to dust. All human knowledge will vanish.

Current science is undecided as to whether the universe will freeze to death or perish in a fiery conflagration, but either way, nothing will survive. There is no escape from this fate, not even for those who achieve emancipation, the arhants, not even for the buddhas, whose bodies will also suffer, decay, and die. Even the Buddha suffered. This fact posits the teaching as its necessary alternative. Therefore, the teaching is the most precious jewel of humanity and its one true purpose and goal. Here one sees the basis of an ethical theory of human life and conduct.

Technocracy

Today, many place their hope in science. They think that science will save us. Science will disentangle the intricate veins of cause and effect on the most fundamental levels. This will enable us to build great machines to provide for all our needs and wants. We will all become rich and powerful and want for nothing. Our understanding of the human body will become so deep and penetrating that we will be able to replace our body parts as they wear out. Eventually, we will even be able to replace our brains, thus achieving functional immortality. This has become the scientific mythos of the 21st century, the new religion of industrial man.

The success of science appears to contradict the teachings of the Buddha about change and suffering. In fact, they do not do so, even if they are true. No matter how rich or powerful we become, no matter how much knowledge we acquire, no matter how many planets we colonize, the fundamental fact of impermanence will always catch up with us, eventually. Annihilation threatens us at every turn. The more we have, the more we have to lose. The more powerful we become, the more likely it is that we will turn the power of self-destruction in each other. Risk is never absent. Accidents are always likely. Eventually, the universe itself will end, one way or another.

How are we going to administer all this power? Are we going to manage it as we have in the past, based on scarcity, competition, and greed? It seems that, if we continue along this path, the very powers we unleash through our knowledge of reality will destroy us because of our own ignorance. Therefore, the teaching and the ethical values of wisdom, loving-kindness, and selflessness that result from its realization, become even more important in the scientific age than in the past. Indeed, without the teaching it seems unlikely that humanity will survive much longer. Certainly, secular materialism has proved incapable of establishing a moral society. Aldous Huxley prophesied this in 1932 in his dystopian novel of a future technocracy, *Brave New World.* One has only to look around to see that this is true.

Three Divine Messengers

The Buddha refers to three divine messengers that appear to humanity to teach us dharma. He is not referring to gods, angels, saviours, or even great teachers of the past or present as taught by other religions. Rather, he refers to an old woman, a hundred years old, frail, bent, crooked, leaning on a stick, shaking, sick, with broken teeth, and grey dry hair and blotchy skin. He refers to an old man, sick, in pain, lying in his own filth, who cannot take care of himself; others must care for him. He refers to a swollen, discoloured, and festering

corpse. Therefore, the Buddha prescribed meditating in cemeteries, surrounded by the rotting bodies, soiled clothing, and filth of the dead.

Humanity learns the reality of its own state through these divine messengers. He who learns their lesson well turns to the teaching with faith. He who ignores them, losing himself in the deluded paths of money, power, sex, alcohol, or drugs, will learn their lesson when he himself suffers, becomes sick, and dies except in our society; we drug the dying into unconsciousness. He, who, despite the vain deluded pursuits of life, learns the lesson of the divine messengers, turns to the teaching. Through the teaching, he will become one with the Deathless, experiencing beneficial effects in this life and in the next.

The Worldlings

The Buddha makes a fundamental social distinction between two human types: the worldling and the student. Puthujjana comes from puthu, 'numerous,' + jana, 'people.' The puthujjana are the 'many-folk'; 'ordinary, average people'; 'worldlings.' The worldlings are the people that the Buddha hesitated to teach when he became enlightened, fearing that they would not understand him. A student is one who listens to the teaching.

Today, many Buddhists think in terms of a primary division between lay and monastic. In fact, the fundamental social distinction made by the Buddha is between the worldling and the student. However, the worldlings are not necessarily non-Buddhists. The Buddha taught two spiritual paths, one for the worldling, based on moral causality, and one for the student, based on the Noble Truths.

A worldling is not necessarily a lay Buddhist and a student a monastic Buddhist. The Pali Canon cites examples of ordained monastics who were worldlings and householders who were or became students. Being a monastic is not a requirement of attaining emancipation. Rather, a worldling is lost in the mirage of involuntary rebirth. This is characteristic

of most of us. A student is the rare being who has heard and understood the teaching. He has achieved Right View, the first step in the Eightfold Path. When we say, "heard and understood," we do not mean merely that a student has adhered to teaching in a formal sense, as one who converts to a religion, for example. Rather, we mean one who has heard and understood "the view" and thus "taken it into themselves," as it were, perfectly. They have taken the decisive first step on the Buddhist path of wisdom.

The worldling experiences suffering on physical and mental levels. The Buddha likens this to two darts. In response to suffering, the worldling turns toward pleasure as an antidote. He does not understand that pleasure is the same as suffering. The more he suffers, the more he turns to pleasure; the more he turns to pleasure, the more he suffers. In the famous simile of the Buddha, a man covered with boils scratches, and the more he scratches the more his boils fester and itch. Cybernetics calls this a "positive feedback loop." In fact, this is the essential nature of addiction. The more he struggles, the more attached he becomes. The more attached he becomes, the more he struggles. Life and addiction are the same.

One sees this clearly in the world today. Nations struggle against nations; billions live in misery, while a few million live in unimaginable luxury, the wealth of the world controlled by the one percent. Despite all this wealth and luxury, the rich are never satisfied and the poor never have enough. The most corrupt societies are the richest. In the process, we are destroying our planet through pollution, resource depletion, and climate change, but no one seems able or willing to do anything about it. Many more prefer to pretend that this is not happening at all. We live in a state of willful ignorance, seeking endless self-gratification, never satisfied and always hungry. The power elites keep the people ignorant while they gorge themselves on the wealth that the people create.

He Who Hears the Dharma

Thus, the worldling perpetuates his own suffering. According to the Buddha, the student does not experience suffering like this. When he feels physical pain, he has a sensation of pain, but there is no correlative mental suffering, no second "dart." He simply feels pain as pain, without attachment. As the Buddha put it, "he does not sorrow, grieve, or lament; he does not weep beating his breast and become distraught. He feels one feeling – a bodily one, not a mental one." Imagine the benefits to our overburdened health care system if this attitude were commonplace. Without attachment, the student neither avoids pain nor seeks pleasure.

Rather, the Buddha says, he knows an exit. He is detached, and through detachment, he frees himself from the positive feedback cycle of pain and pleasure. He can do this because he understands the teaching, especially the Four Truths. The student is not merely one who believes in the teaching. He is not even one who knows the teaching as a matter of intellectual or academic reflection. Rather, through believing and knowing the teaching, he realizes the truth of the teaching in and for himself and lives it. Thus, he experiences the effect thereof as a matter of direct realization. Only such a one is on the path of the teaching. He awakes to the truth of the world.

The Four Truths that underlie the realization of the student are:

(1) The truth of suffering;
(2) The truth of the origin of suffering;
(3) The truth of the passing away of suffering; and
(4) The truth of the way of escape from suffering.

The word here translated as 'suffering' is dukkha. Dukkha derives from the Sanskrit, DU, meaning 'opposite' or 'wrong.' The English slang expression, 'duh,' meaning 'bad' or 'woeful,' derives from this word. The word also means 'two.' It is the complement of sukkah, 'agreeable' or 'pleasant.' Suffering does not refer exclusively or even primarily to physical pain.

It refers to the mental anguish to which physical pain gives rise. Suffering is the ontological or existential dissatisfaction with life expressed in English by words like 'angst,' 'ennui,' and existential dread. Thus, the Buddha anticipated existentialism by thousands of years.

The First Truth of the Buddha is that suffering penetrates all life, turtles all the way down. There is no escape. The Buddha does not deny that pleasure occurs, only that it is permanent or enduring. Therefore, pleasure turns into pain and pain turns into pleasure in an endless repetitive cycle. The core of both is fundamental dissatisfaction. The more aware that one becomes, the more acutely one feels this. Thus, suffering, pleasure, and pain all come together in the unity of fundamental ignorance.

The Second Truth is that the cause of suffering is desirous attachment. The Second Truth is the doctrine of moral causality. The doctrine of moral causality states that every cause has its effect, and every effect has its cause. Universal causality is a Buddhist axiom shared by science. Dharma, reality, is the sole exception, but dharma is not a "phenomenon."

Thus, there must also be a cause of suffering. The word translated as 'desire' is tanha. It means 'dryness' and 'thirst.' It signifies craving, hunger for excitement, and the fever of unsatisfied longing. Westerners are so addicted to desire that they identify it with life itself. They cannot conceive of any other kind of happiness. They declare, erroneously, that Buddhism is "against life." Some misunderstand the Second Truth as referring to vitality, despite the Buddha's repeated admonitions to develop energy.

The Third Truth follows logically from the first and second truths as the logical antithesis of the second. The Pali word is nirodha, which means 'destruction,' 'cessation,' 'annihilation,' i.e., of tanha, desirous attachment. To a Westerner this sounds like nihilism. In fact, tanha is illusory. The destruction of illusion is not a real annihilation, but rather the opposite, an awakening. It is a "cutting through" illusion to the reality

of suffering itself, thence to the reality of bliss. It is synonymous with realization and with emancipation.

Finally, the Fourth Truth refers to the way or path. This Eightfold Path leads to complete emancipation. The realization of the path is synonymous with enlightenment itself.

The fundamental root of the anxiety and agitation that arises due to desirous attachment is the belief in the reality of a self. The belief in a self has four aspects – form is the self, the self has form, form is in the self, or the self is in form. Because form is changeable, this creates confusion, anxiety, and agitation in the mind of the sufferer who is addicted to the notion of a self. This also applies to feelings, perceptions, volitional formations, and consciousness – all the psychological qualities that one typically takes to be the self. All of these are impermanent. He who believes that they are inextricably involved with the self, or the self with them, experiences the suffering resulting from desirous attachment. Similarly, the student does not experience desirous attachment to any of these things. He frees himself from anxiety, agitation, and suffering because he realizes that the self is empty.

Worldly conflict is the result of attachment to sensuality. Spiritual conflict is the result of attachment to beliefs, especially beliefs "infected" by subjectivity, craving, ego-conceit, and distorted perceptions. Worldly and spiritual conflicts undermine the innate desire of all beings to live in peace and harmony. This concept of spiritual conflict being due to attachment to beliefs is the basis of the sectarianism that one finds in all religions today, including Buddhism. It follows that the cure to such a distorted concept of beliefs is non-sectarianism. One achieves non-sectarianism by the practice of universalism and by the reconciliation of contrary beliefs through the practice of logical syncretism. Similarly, sectarianism is one of the eighteen root downfalls of a bodhisattva. Geshe Tashi Tsering of the Jamyang Buddhist Centre in London comments on this:

The sixth one [referring to the root downfalls] is referring to stopping or abandoning the practice of Buddhadharma, either completely or partly, due to misinformation. For example, for people who are practising the Mahayana path, there is such a strong emphasis on the Mahayana teachings that there is a risk of saying the Theravada teachings are not important. Conversely, if one puts the emphasis very strongly on the Theravadin teachings, there is a risk of thinking that the Mahayana teachings are not relevant. Of course, there are different emphases but that does not mean that we should abandon one teaching or the other. They are there purely due to an individual's interest and mental dispositions.

Lama Tsong Khapa said very clearly in his Lam-rim Chen-mo, The Great Exposition of the Gradual Path to Enlightenment, that a unique feature of the lam-rim is that through studying it the entire Buddhadharma can be understood as a spiritual path to achieve Buddhahood. In the earlier stage, the middle and small scope teaching, there is a strong emphasis on the law of karma and the Four Noble Truths, whereas in the great scope there is much more emphasis on bodhicitta or Mahayana teachings. The entire teaching shows a practitioner where to start and where to end. Like the analogy I often use, if you pull one corner of the cloth, the whole cloth moves. To understand bodhicitta, we must understand emptiness and cause-and-effect. It is so important not to abandon one part of Buddhadharma just because that is not our main emphasis or because we are following a particular tradition. Of course, different traditions suit different mental dispositions ("The Bodhisattva Vows," London, February-March 2001, http://www.bodhicitta.net/BODHISATTVAVOWS.htm).

The Buddha exemplified this practice in his own discussions with the adherents of other sects. The Buddha recommended finding common ground with others, especially those holding different beliefs. Then he based discussion on this, identifying axioms and implications and following them out, rather than focusing on differences.

Samsara

When the Buddha refers to the eight worldly conditions that keep the "world turning around," he is referring to involuntary rebirth. Often one sees samsara mistranslated as 'existence.' The literal meaning of the word is 'faring on.' It refers specifically to transmigration through time. The cyclical nature of existence is its essence. Thus, the word does not refer to a "thing" at all. Rather, it refers to a process universally inherent in all phenomena.

All phenomena, including living beings, are born (i.e., caused), endure for a time (though this too is illusory, because everything changes continuously), and then cease to exist (i.e., they die). This cyclical process is the essential nature of all phenomena, from the infinitesimal (i.e., the subatomic level) to the universe and beyond. Thus, the world itself is synonymous with time. Time is the great mystery. There is no quantum variable for time. The experience of the self imposes the "arrow of time" on reality. Quantum physics calls this the "act of observation." In string theory, time is one-dimensional, whereas space is multi-dimensional.

The eight conditions referred to by the Buddha are gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, and pleasure and pain. One may generalize these as property, society, and physicality. The elements of rebirth are not things in themselves. They are not absolutes. They are conditional. If one abolishes attachment to property, social relations, and the body, one abolishes rebirth. This is the essence of renunciation. The negative implications of the English word are misleading. Renouncing an illusion is not renunciation; it is liberation. The teachings of the Buddha only are negative from the perspective of the relative, contingent, and illusory. From the perspective of the absolute and the real, they are not negative at all. They are positive.

What is the origin of involuntary rebirth? The Buddha says that, because of the law of causality, rebirth is without beginning; to posit a beginning posits an uncaused cause. Thus, Buddhism rejects theism. Theism asserts that God is

the uncaused cause. The question arises that if God, the First Cause, is uncaused, why posit a creator at all? There is no need. Just say that reality is uncaused.

Buddhism is singularly scientific in positing both the beginninglessness of rebirth and the sheer enormity of the cycles that constitute its "faring on." In a famous simile, the Buddha compares the enormity of the macrocosmic cycles to the time that it would take for a person to wipe away a mountain with a rag. This duration, while finite, is unimaginably long. Compared with the traditional Judaic notion that creation is about 6,000 years old, the Buddhist model approximates the current scientific understanding of astronomical cycles. The Buddha says that the number of cycles is like the length of the Ganges expressed in terms of the number of grains of sand between its source and the sea. I will not even attempt to quantify this.

2

The Thus Come One

Impermanence and suffering indicate the reality of permanence and happiness. Therefore, non-enlightenment posits enlightenment. Because rebirth is illusory, enlightenment must be real. A coin cannot have one side. Rebirth is merely its deluded reflection. The root of the Mahayana doctrine of the Buddha-potential appears in the Pali Canon as the "pure bright mind." Since the world is unsatisfactory, eventually one will see this. It is only a small step from realizing the essential unsatisfactoriness of the world to formulating the intention to escape, since all beings desire happiness. Thus, the world generates the aspiration to attain enlightenment and, finally, enlightenment itself.

The Lineage of Bodhisattvas

That some achieve enlightenment is the universal tradition of humanity. In the Buddhist lineage, it refers to twenty-seven buddhas. These buddhas preceded the historical Buddha. The Buddha lineage begins with a Buddha called Tanhankara. The fourth Buddha, Dipankara, predicted the future enlightenment of Sumedha, a rich Brahman turned hermit, who many ages later was reborn as Gotama. Our blessed age will have known five buddhas: Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa, Gotama, and Metteyya. Metteyya will appear in the far future. These are not the only buddhas who existed in the past. According to the Pali Canon, innumerable buddhas have flourished in past cosmic ages of vast cycles of time. In the

Buddhist tradition, the duration of an age ranges from thousands to trillions of years, or it is incalculable. The Pali Canon also refers to a twenty-ninth Buddha, Metteyya. Metteyya will be born long after people have forgotten the historical Buddha. and his teaching, at the zenith of a veritable golden age of progress, some thousands of years hence.

Whether one accepts these traditions as literally true is beside the point. What is important is the underlying idea. Expressions of ideas in historical, metaphorical, mythological, or symbolic terms do not affect the underlying meaning. In this way, one can extract meaning from non-historic texts without "confusing the planes."

The word bodhisattva comes from Pali bodhi-, awakened + satta, living. The bodhisattva has "woken up"; he has formulated right view and acquired perfect insight. Like the Buddha, a bodhisattva vows to achieve enlightenment to become a perfected being, to free all sentient beings from the delusion of worldliness. In the Eightfold Path, this refers to a being who has "heard the word." Thus, formulating right view because of this realization, he undertakes the second step of initiation, viz., Right Intention. The bodhisattva is worthy. The vow of an arhant is not "other" than the vow of a bodhisattva, but its essence. In the same way, Mahayana is not other than Hinayana and Hinayana is not other than Mahayana. The realization of the unity of Hinayana and Mahayana culminates in the doctrine of the "single" or "universal" vehicle.

The Bodhisattva inhabits the plane of happiness. This is a higher vibration or dimension of reality in the Buddhist system of vertical and horizontal extension that constitutes the thirty-one planes of existence. It is above the human realm; only ghosts, animals, and hell-beings rank lower than humans. Humans are special, however, in that they can hypostasize the Buddha-potential. Those below us suffer too much. Those above us are too comfortable.

In the universe, human birth is rare. It presents an opportunity for realization that one should value by seeking to live by a code of ethics that will create the merit needed to be reborn as a human. That is the first task of everyone. The Buddhist code of ethics is not unique. The Buddha did not consider ethics to be especially important. He refers to ethical practices as "inferior matters of mere morality" in the first discourse of the Sutta Pitaka. This contrasts with the emphasis on formal credentials, established curricula, courses of training, and rules that dominates ecclesiastical sectarianism, as though one can put the teaching in a box.

The historical Buddha was born as a bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas have many degrees of realization. All but the highest are subject to the afflictions of an erroneous mind. However, this was Gotama's final birth before he would attain complete realization. For twenty-nine years, Gotama lived the life of Riley, including sensual pleasures. He partied and achieved prowess in military sports, but he was also a pampered child. He married young, happily, but had a son he named Rahula. Rahula means "fetter" or, in some interpretations, "eclipse." Gotama was completely human and even subject to despair and doubt. Sometimes one forgets that the Buddha was a fully human being. At the age of 29, Gotama experienced a call. His original bodhisattva vow re-asserted itself. Then he began the final six-year adventure that led him to complete emancipation and the attainment of Buddhahood.

The Tathagata

"Tathagata" is the word the Buddha used all through the Pali Canon to refer to himself. Of uncertain derivation, there are at least eight traditional interpretations, none of which is certain. It refers to an arhant; people understood it, though no one has found earlier references to it in non-Buddhist literature. It means something like "thus gone," with the emphasis on "thus," from Pali tatha-, 'thus, in this way' + gatha, 'gone, gone away.' "The Thus Come One." The Buddha's

realization is so abstract, so post-linguistic, and so transcendent that no one can express it any other way. The word itself is numinous, like the Hebrew "unpronounceable name of God," Yahweh.

Although bodhisattvas are "thrown up" by the churning of the world, they are rarer than humans are; humans are, of course, already a rare rebirth. Bodhisattvas constitute a human elect. As such, they may be born in favourable circumstances. It is a widespread tradition that bodhisattvas also have close communication with the spiritual realms. Divine beings, sentient beings whose bodies are pure mind and form, extremely intelligent, long-lived, beautiful, mostly happy, and powerful, inhabit the spiritual realms. Like all beings, they are also limited and subject to delusion and death. Divine beings are not "gods," but they include all the deities and angels (so-called) of antiquity.

The Buddha asserted that part of the sacred knowledge he had realized came from the spiritual worlds. Divine beings inhabit parallel dimensions of experience that intersect our own. Physical constraints did not limit the Buddha's mind. He was able to experience (access) that totality. This is the technical meaning of "omniscience." Psychedelic research clearly shows these experiences are neither symbolic nor subjective. Rather, they are experiential aspects of yogic practice.

The bodhisattva is "in between." He is in the world, but no longer of it. He is awake to the truth of his own nature. He aspires to a Buddhahood he both is and is not. The Buddha potential is both real and potential. One can have intimations of Buddha-nature and still be subject to delusion. Even advanced realizers can still suffer from delusion. The full realization of Buddha-nature is synonymous with "extinction." "Extinction" is negative only from the perspective of the world. From the perspective of the absolute, it is positive. The Buddha called emancipation "the unaging, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme sanctuary from bondage, Nibbana."

The most authentic version of the renunciation of the Buddha says that when Gotama left home, his parents wished otherwise and they wept. This account differs from the story that the Bodhisattva stole out of the palace when everyone was sleeping and Rahula was an infant. The later description reads like a reaction to the statement the Buddha's parents opposed his leaving home.

Gotama fell in with a gnostic yogi who claimed to have experienced "nothingness." Gotama emulated his example and after a period of practice experienced "nothingness." The name of the Buddha's first teacher was Alara Kalama. Gotama was not satisfied with this attainment, so he went to another teacher, who taught him to experience "neither-perception-nor-non-perception." The name of the Buddha's second teacher was Uddaka Ramaputta, "son of Rama."

The planes of "nothingness" and "neither perception nor non-perception" are the top two dimensions of the formless realm of the thirty-one planes of existence. These dimensions are the highest planes of the world. These planes are simultaneously ontological and mental states. Mind itself is the primary ontology.

When the Bodhisattva left home at the age of 29, five ascetics followed him. Their leader was Kondanna. Kondanna was a Brahman scholar in the Kapilavatthu court of Suddhodana, the Buddha's father. He alone predicted that Gotama would become a World Teacher at the infant's naming ceremony. Kondanna based his prediction on divination by physiognomy. Physiognomy is the art of determining character or personal characteristics from the form or features of the body and face. It is not clear whether the group of five followed Gotama when he was associated with Alara Kalama and Uttar Ramaputta. Together with Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama, and Assaji, Gotama engaged in all the traditional practices of proto-Shaivite self-mortification until he was on the verge of dying.

Shaivism originated in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE from the same renunciant counterculture as the Buddha himself.

Buddhism and Shaivism share significant cultural characteristics. These include the cross-legged posture; yoga practice; tolerance towards women; renunciation of household life, sex, and childbearing; a northern Indian provenance; anti-Brahmanism; the rejection of caste and consequent association with untouchables; and a cemetery cult, including the ritual use of human bones.

Gotama experimented with yoga. He experimented with mind meditation, breath meditation, and breathless meditation. Because of these exercises, he experienced a kind of illumination, accompanied by severe physical pain and burning sensations. Gotama bore down even harder on himself. He continued the breathless meditation and starved himself. Gotama took this to the point of nearly dying. Then he abandoned it, realizing these practices are self-defeating. In the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha compares the practices of self-mortification with the physical, verbal, and mental impurities of the Brahmans, and declares that neither will attain enlightenment because of their exclusive emphasis on the body.

Finally, he recalled a childhood experience he had while sitting under a rose-apple tree. He had entered a simple meditative state. He resolved to enter this state consciously. However, he could not do so in his extremely sick state. At this point, he took a little rice milk porridge from a passing village girl called Sujata. Sujata offered it to him, mistaking him for the spirit of the tree under which he sat. Gotama had broken his vow of abstinence. This caused his companions to abandon him. They believed he had reverted to the luxurious life of his youth. Gotama went into seclusion in a pleasant clearing by a river where he could seek alms at the local village each morning.

Alone, Gotama became absorbed in a series of progressive mental meditations. The Bodhisattva's meditation consisted of progressively refined states of concentration, detachment, and bliss. They culminated in the memory of past lives and he

realized his essential identity with the totality of the world and all beings.

According to Buddhist tradition, this occurred during the first of three watches of the night. In the following two watches, he realized the truth of the law of moral causality and the Four Truths. Thus, he attained emancipation and finally cut the bond of attachment to time.

The Chain of Cause and Effect

The Buddha realized the significance of the law of interconnectedness even before his enlightenment. Paticcasamuppada is quite the word to unravel. The PED has "arising on the grounds of a preceding cause." The law of causality was already a well-established concept in Indian tradition. The Buddha realized that the law of causality leads inevitably to the realization that everything is infinitely interconnected. Therefore, everything is mutually dependent. Ananda told the Buddha he understood this concept. The Buddha rebuked Ananda. He likened the doctrine to a hairball and proclaimed its complexity. Emancipation arises out of the realization of the doctrine of universal interconnectedness as the cessation of delusion and the key to enlightenment. In the language of quantum physics, the Buddha has discovered the "waveform" nature of reality.

The Buddha realized that the essence of the law of causality is not action, but intention. This realization distinguishes the Buddha's realization from the Indian tradition culminating in Jainism. The mind generates causality. Thus, one prepares oneself for the realization of enlightenment, not found or bound by rules or actions. The primary causal factor lies in volition itself. Volition is intimately involved with ignorance. Volition is necessarily innocent of both ignorance and enlightenment. Thus, the Buddha decisively separated himself from the notion of salvation by action or non-action, including ethics, rules, rituals, and beliefs.

The foregoing is the general meaning of interconnectedness. The Buddha applied the general principle to the conditioned arising of suffering. He also applied it to a less well-known analysis of the conditioned arising of property. The latter relates to the Buddha's views on politics and government. Here we will simply summarize the Buddha's view of the conditioned arising of suffering. This is the twelvefold chain.

When the Buddha was a Bodhisattva, he was already reflecting on the causes of suffering. He proceeded to analyze each cause systematically, beginning with what one knows – ageing, death, and the whole mass of suffering. The immediate cause of all this is birth or rebirth. However, the law of causality states that every phenomenon must have a cause. Therefore, the Buddha resolves birth into a more fundamental concept. This is becoming, i.e., impermanence or change. Becoming is a synonym for the world. It refers to things changing through time.

Becoming resolves into five fundamental aspects of what one conventionally calls mind or perhaps "the psyche," including desirous attachment; feeling; contact; and the six senses, i.e., seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and thinking. If one reverses the order one can see how the six senses lead to the unity of object, subject, and sensation called contact; leading to feeling, especially the feelings of pleasure and pain; leading to desire; and finally hardening into attachment. This is the method of reversal.

More fundamental even than the six senses are name and form. The PED glosses namarupa as individuality, the individual being (paradoxically, because name and form are opposites). Name refers specifically to the immaterial, cognitive aspect of the person, especially the linguistic faculty of speech. Form refers to body-form-appearance. More fundamental than name and form is consciousness. The Buddha says name and form causes consciousness, and consciousness causes name and form. Bodhi describes this relationship as a "vortex," a word also used by

Padmasambhava, the great 8th century Tantric adept who is credited with converting the Tibetan people to Vajrayana Buddhism.

The cause of consciousness is the karmic complex or involved system of causes and effects that together constitute the innate tendencies that work themselves out continuously through consciousness, name and form, etc. Finally, the Buddha identifies the root cause of this whole chain of causes and effects as "not knowing" or ignorance.

The chain of cause and effect has a few interesting aspects. First, the Buddha identified it, at least in essence, prior to his enlightenment. It became an essential element of his post-enlightenment teachings, along with the childhood memory of meditating under the rose-apple tree. This fact gives us a fascinating glimpse into the mind of the Bodhisattva prior to his enlightenment. It causes us to realize that the enlightenment was not, or not just, a qualitative transformation of state in which, one moment he is ignorant, and the next moment he is enlightened. Rather, it shows the teaching as a progressive process in which the Buddha engaged even prior to his enlightenment.

Second, it shows that the Buddha's philosophical method does not begin with ontological absolutes. This was the custom of Indian philosophy before him. Rather, it shows how the Buddha began with the immediacies of human experience. From these he extrapolated to larger generalizations about the nature of reality. The Buddha anticipated the development of what Westerners would like to think of as "modern" philosophy, especially phenomenology, process philosophy, and existentialism, not merely by centuries, but millennia.

Third, it shows the Buddha applying the principle of causality to everything.

Fourth, it shows that the Buddha did not make a hard distinction between psychology and ontology or subjective and objective realities. Rather, in common with the universal wisdom tradition, this includes all mystical understandings of

the world; macrocosm and microcosm, the universal and the individual are opposite sides of the same coin and essentially identical. This also appears in the thirty-one planes of existence. The thirty-one planes of existence are simultaneously thirty-one levels of consciousness or yogic/psychological states.

Fifth, it leads to the paradoxical conclusion that the absolute, reality itself, is fundamentally ignorant. The 'no-information' state of the absolute is a fundamental point of the great Korean sutra, the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment. Otherwise, the appearance of the world would be inexplicable. This in turn leads to the realization that the absolute is trans-dual.

This reminds one of C.G. Jung's comparison of the universe to the unconscious, the "not conscious." The unconscious universe posits phenomenality as the "skilful means" by which the unconscious progressively becomes self-conscious: in Jung's language, individuation through a process of differentiation. This is why, when we translate the term tathagatagarbha, commonly translated as "Buddha nature," I prefer the term "Buddha-potential." Otherwise, one posits an insoluble contradiction, i.e., a perfectly enlightened being that is nevertheless somehow also ignorant. Christian theology suffers from a similar problem when it posits God. God is perfectly good, yet it is the ultimate source of evil. Here one directly contemplates the mystery of the one becoming two, which is the source of suffering, the subject-object dichotomy that yoga seeks to overcome by a synchronized brain state induced by mental concentration or "entrainment."

Finally, sixth, one sees in the chain references to the two fundamentals of the Buddhist path, viz., desire and ignorance. Most of the links in this chain are not things one can easily change. Birth, becoming, mind, cause and effect – these are not things one can simply "turn off." They are ontological and thus outside our conscious control. However, one knows from the Four Truths that desire is the cause of suffering. As

a karmically generated phenomenon, desire is transitory. Thus, it can cease and, by its cessation, one can achieve emancipation. The Four Truths are the basis of the Hinayana path of renunciation. However, even in the Pali Canon, desire is not primary. Desire itself has a cause, and that cause is ignorance. In the Prajnaparamitas one reads,

> *Having given but a little gift, having guarded but a little morality, having developed but a little patience, having exerted but a little vigour, having entered trance but a little, having developed wisdom but a little, a Bodhisattva, a great being, who wants by skilful conversion to make this small amount for all beings on account of the knowledge of all modes into an immeasurable and incalculable one, should train in perfect wisdom.*

Perfect Wisdom

Perfect Wisdom (or Right View) is the first step of the Eightfold Path. Peter Masefield in his extraordinary analysis of the Pali Canon, *Divine Revelation in the Pali Canon,* recognized the significance of this. The Buddha refers to "the breakthrough by wisdom." The cultivation of wisdom is the basis of the Mahayana path, clearly stated in the first Mahayana sutra.

Wisdom is especially important in the Dharma Transmission to the West. Many Westerners misconstrue wisdom, either as the distant goal of the path or as an irrelevant affectation, conflating wisdom with empty intellectualism. This intellectual antipathy is widespread.

The Buddha is clear that wisdom is not attainable by mere reasoning. There are examples in the Pali Canon of disciples who achieve awakening quickly, with little or no meditative practice, simply by hearing the teaching of the Buddha. Sometimes the Buddha calls this "dharma in brief." Thus, the chain works in both directions, not merely as the cause of suffering but also, by the method of reversal, the "cause" of enlightenment as well. Enlightenment is a non-causal dharma. Enlightenment transcends causation. The Buddha

rediscovered this way. He did not invent the path. Rather, it is the primordial path known to the ancients too. The Buddha calls this the Eightfold Path. He likens it to an old path found in the forest, leading to an abandoned and forgotten city.

The Mission of the Buddha

At first, the Buddha hesitated to teach. He considered following the path of a hermit. Sahampati, the chief of the Brahma world, persuaded him to teach. The Buddha wanted to teach his first two teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. When he discovered they had recently died, the Buddha resolved to visit Kondanna's group to beat the drum of the Deathless. On the road, the first person to whom the Buddha offered his realization doubted not only the Buddha's realization. He doubted the Buddha himself. This was Uppaka. Uppaka was an Ajivaka, a major samana philosophy. The Ajivakas believed in cosmic determinism. Uppaka rejected the Buddha because he was self-realized, i.e., without a teacher. Scratching his head, he left the Buddha on the road.

After his enlightenment, after deciding to teach, the Buddha instructed the group of five in the Deer Park, Sarnath, northeast of present-day Benares. The ascetics had already rejected the Buddha due to the accusation of luxurious living, recollecting the indulgences of his youth. They were hard to convince, but he taught them, beginning with the Middle Way, resulting in the realization of emancipation.

Kondanna experienced the truth of the teachings for himself, thereby becoming a stream-enterer and, five days later, an arhant. He died alone after twelve years living at Mandakini Lake, Chaddanta Forest, in the Himalayas, some time prior to the Buddha's death. He left his retreat once only, on the day before his death, to bid the Buddha farewell, kissing and caressing his feet with his hands.

The Middle Way is the place between extremes. One may interpret it within yogic, ethical, and epistemological frameworks. Yogically, the middle way is the state of perfect

physical and mental equilibrium. Ethically, it is the balance of loving-kindness and reason. Epistemologically, the middle way connotes direct experience, neither physical nor metaphysical. It also refers to the transcendence of duality, positing the reality of the trans-dual. The trans-dual is another necessary implication of "middleness." "Middleness" is also implicit in the Tibetan doctrine of the bardo, which the Pali Canon implies in the doctrine of the "intermediate state."

The Buddha identifies the Middle Way with the Eightfold Path. It is important to remember that a wheel turns. The "coming forth" of the teaching is dynamic. It is never a copy, but an ever-present, self-propagating energy-information-reality pattern or system. In this way, the Buddha, by the power of truth, set the teaching in motion in Sarnath. It continues to "turn" to this day. The recluses, plus the Buddha himself, formed the nucleus of the first Buddhist community, consisting of six members. Kondanna became the first monk and the first arhant.

Later, the Buddha asks Ananda in the presence of the order to tell him what he is like: "Ananda, explain more fully the Tathagata's wonderful and marvellous qualities." Ananda compares the Buddha to a whole litany of wonderful things, starting with a miraculous birth. The Buddha replies, "Remember this too as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Tathagata. Feelings, perceptions, thoughts – these are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear." That is to say, the art of meditation is greater even than a miracle. A method of meditation is implied.

What the Buddha realized about the yogic path is that torturing the body is not required or even beneficial. Instead, the yogi can simply withdraw his attention from attachment to physicality through concentrated attention and awareness. In the three similes "never heard before," the Buddha describes two wet sappy pieces of wood lying in water and dry land and a dry sapless piece of wood lying on dry land. The dry sapless piece of wood is the arhant. The deeper meaning refers to the symbolism of fire and ignition in

relation to enlightenment and solar symbolism. Fire is the "psychic heat," the tummo or kundalini – the fire of enlightenment itself. Thus, the power of detachment generates or activates an energetic state or potential that can in turn "ignite" the state of illumination or enlightenment. The Buddha is the relative of the Sun, himself a descendent of the solar race. The Sun is the door to the deathless. The path of transcendence is the solar path. The Buddha realized that asceticism is still attachment to physicality. He formulated the intention of achieving a state of perfect happiness not bound to physicality. This state is neither self-indulgent nor ascetic. It is rooted in the detachment, intention, and awareness that lead to awakening.

3

Toward the Dharma

Much is made of the fact that the Buddha taught with an open hand, not the closed fist of the professional guru or Brahmanic priest. The implication of this statement is that the Buddha effectively refutes the concept of secret wisdom as such. What the Buddha is really referring to is a subtle wisdom kept secret by an organization. Some think the Buddha's rejection of secrecy refutes Vajrayana, but the Buddha's statement in the Pali Canon is far less obvious.

First, he reviles the Brahmans as exemplars of wrong view. Their mantras are secret, like illicit love affairs. The same moon illuminates the night of the Brahmans, and their day the sun, which shine openly and not in secret, like the teaching and training proclaimed by the Buddha. The teaching and the training of the Buddha both illuminate and expose the secret tradition of the Brahmans. The Buddha says the teaching and the training restore the secret wisdom that the Brahmans lost and only preserved in a distorted form. Thus, the Buddha is not attacking the primordial philosophy. Rather, he is criticizing the practice of secrecy in the service of religious and caste privilege. The Buddha discusses it openly, in the service of universal emancipation.

Ultimately, reason alone is not enough to understand the teaching. He refers to "direct knowledge" or gnosis resulting in realization by the suitably inclined individual within a relatively brief time. The teaching is therefore a "secret

wisdom" or an "esoteric [direct] knowledge" or gnosis. The comparison of this wisdom with the moon and sun indicates its luminous and transcendent qualities. Wisdom is not ordinary knowledge. It is not accessible by scholarship or even training alone. The salvific wisdom is intrinsically effective through the power of truth. It leads to immediate awakening.

The Development of Wisdom

Kesaputta is a town in Bihar, India. In the Buddha's time, it was located at the edge of a forest where recluses stopped at night before continuing through the forest the next day. Many different spiritual practices and beliefs came to the attention of the citizens of this town. Today, it boasts the largest Buddha stupa in the world. When the Buddha travelled here, he discussed the wide variety of teachings. There was much doubt and confusion. Therefore, people asked the Buddha how to choose between rival religious ideologies in a multi-cultural world. This situation was not vastly different from the situation in the world today.

In answer, the Buddha rejects the idea that one should base one's judgment on oral traditions, teaching lineages, hearsay, texts, logic, inferential reasoning, cogitation, pondering, rhetoric, or just because one's teacher teaches it. Instead, he recommends that one should submit whatever teachings one hears to the test of questioning; one should submit whatever practices one learns about to the test of personal experience.

This does not mean the Buddha rejects the oral traditions, teaching lineages, and the rest. Rather, he directs us to re-examine them in a certain way. Nor is his deference to individual judgment a naive counsel people should "do what they like" based on "what they feel." Usually this is just an "ego trip." At worst, it can lead to a completely deluded state. Rather, questioning sacred truth is an endeavour of the utmost gravity. If one should not accept, neither should one reject anything prematurely. Otherwise, one may lose the opportunity to experience insight and truth through further

consideration. The recognition of the ultimate impotence of reason is not a counsel to abandon reason. One can transcend reason only by the cultivation of wisdom, through the constant questioning by which one maintains its purity.

The Buddha's method discovers spiritual truth through the direct questioning of consciousness. He begins with what is obvious. Through the accumulation of observations and inferences, he builds up broad cosmological and ontological insights. This method suggests Socrates's method of dialectic. This tradition flowered in the 20th century in the West through Husserl, Heidegger, Whitehead, existentialism, and post-modernism. Socrates himself died in 399 BCE, at the age of 71, about the same time as the Buddha. Dr. Herbert Guenther, author of *The Teachings of Padmasambhava* (1996) and many other books, makes similar statements about Padmasambhava. He calls him the first process philosopher. Others have called the Buddha a 21st century philosopher. Richard Gombrich has called the Buddha the greatest philosopher of all time. The Buddha's teachings must have been perceived by the Buddha's contemporaries as nothing less than revelatory. True transcendental philosophy is intrinsically enlightening.

The Buddha declared that this kind of questioning or reasoning into spiritual truth, beginning with the immediacies of human experience, was also to be applied to himself and his teaching and community. He invited others to watch him, evaluate him, criticize him, judge him, and see if he was crazy or deluded or not. He did this over a period of 45 years of continuous teaching. He invited everyone to think about what he said, perhaps to refine one's understanding or infer implications. In this way, through the power of truth, he built up the teachings in the only way such building up can occur – by speaking and thus influencing the thoughts, words, and deeds of those who hear him. Another great bodhisattva by the name of Jesus put it this way: "A tree is known by its fruit."

The Purity of the Guru

Similarly, one can establish the purity of a teacher by evaluating what one sees and hears. Its unwholesome fruits will betray an unwholesome teaching; one can discern a wholesome teaching through its wholesome fruits. Thus, by its observed effects one can judge a teaching. There is an interesting book, entitled *Stripping the Gurus* (2009), by Geoffrey Falk, which applies the Buddha's counsel in practice, nor are Buddhist teachers exempt. Every disciple of a teacher should read this book as a corrective to the naive enthusiasm to which we are all liable. In the Tibetan tradition, one evaluates a potential teacher for twelve years before accepting him as a teacher. Attachment to the teacher is just another attachment.

This approach to the teaching would mean it would be subject to continuous review, interpretation, reinterpretation, and expansion and change as its theoretical and practical implications are developed and explored. Thus, the Buddha refers to a vertical hierarchy of "levels" of "dharma" with its "dark and bright counterparts." That the teaching becomes more sublime the better one understands it is clear, but what are the dark and bright counterparts? The Buddha uses the same metaphor with respect to moral causality. He distinguishes between the cause that leads to happiness and the cause that leads to unhappiness. Similarly, the Pali Canon includes a "wrong" eightfold path. Thus, I take dark dharma to refer to wrong beliefs.

In this way, one gains faith in the Buddha based on certainty based on inquiry, including inquiry into the limits of inquiry, rather than some fatuous "faith." The Buddha says in one famous phrase, "ye sotavanto pamuncantu saddham." I render this as: "Let the hearers free themselves from faith." Some take it to mean the opposite, but I read it as a paradox: the way to genuine faith is through faithlessness. True faith does not cling to authority or tradition; it is born of insight.

This is the cutting edge of the diamond of wisdom.

It affirms that reason can weigh spiritual philosophy, yet experience itself lies beyond the reach of the dualistic rational faculty bound to the law of contradiction.

The Primordial Tradition

The Buddha does not repudiate the religion of the Brahmans merely because the Brahmans held different beliefs. The Buddha's repudiation of Brahmanism is not sectarian. The Buddha rebukes the Brahmans as degenerate remnants of an archaic, long forgotten spirituality. This degeneration afflicts all religions, Buddhism included. This spirituality is even more primeval than the Vedas. The Buddha says, "Now something may be accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken." This is "penetrating by wisdom." The Buddha appears to be alluding to a primordial spiritual tradition. It predates even the Vedas, of which the Vedas themselves are but a reflection. In particular, he derides the Brahmans for their lack of spirituality.

In accordance with the theory of progressive dharma, the Buddha presents a theory of education. Meaning, pondering, desire [sic], will, scrutiny, and striving, culminating in realization "with the body," follow memorization. This process culminates in "penetration by wisdom." Another order goes from faith to striving, through visiting, respecting, and listening to the teacher, hearing the teaching, memorization, examining (meaning), pondering, desire, will, and scrutiny.

The Body Witness

Three points are especially noteworthy. "With the body" is an interesting phrase. Realization is not merely mental; it involves the whole being, including what one refers to as the physical. Second, the Buddha refers positively to desire. This is aspiration or energy, the desire for realization, provided it is detached. There is desirous attachment and desire freed

from attachment. The third point is the centrality of the teacher. The teacher is central to the traditional Indian practice of guru yoga. Tibet strongly emphasizes this practice.

The Buddha's concept of guru yoga is different from the naive worship one has come to associate with the term bhakti. Bhakti has led to many abuses, in both Asia and the West. Questioning is the basis of the proper relationship with the teacher. It can only be intimate. It entirely excludes vertical ecclesiasticism. In the noble Buddhist order, the power of ordination devolves to the bhikkhus. True ordination is horizontal, not vertical. It should be freely available to all in principle since all have buddha potential.

The Buddha's method of dealing with different beliefs is to identify which beliefs one holds in common. Then he extrapolates from these. The term I propose to use to describe this process is "logical syncretism." No matter where one starts, questioning leads inevitably to the whole view in detail. The teaching is a hologram. A hologram is present in its entirety at every point, but imprecise. The more points one selects, the sharper the image becomes. Similarly, the teaching is present in every word and sentence of every discourse. The more discourses are read, the clearer one's understanding becomes. The Buddha says he who practises even one sentence of the teaching has the whole thing. Potentially, therefore, it becomes possible to collate the totality of all Buddhist experience. The realization of the holographic nature of the teaching leads to the single vehicle. I have identified this development with the Dharma Transmission to the West.

Ethics

With respect to ethics, the Buddha took a pragmatic view. One should abandon thoughts, words, and actions that lead to unwholesome effects, based on the law of moral causality. Thoughts, words, and actions that lead to wholesome effects should be cultivated. He specifically rejects the Jain doctrine

of non-action or inaction. According to this view, one should renounce both positive and negative causes and effects. Wholesome states are the foundation of enlightenment, itself the ultimate wholesome state. Since inaction leads to an unwholesome state, it cannot be the path. This view must be distinguished from the view that pleasure is the criterion of good. The Buddha does not base his ethical precepts on temporary or relative gain or happiness. Rather, he bases them on the ultimate intrinsic gain or happiness that results from them. The ethics of the Buddha are pragmatic, absolute, and essential.

The Buddha rejects the idea that merely following rules, or even an ethical regime of behaviour alone, is sufficient to attain enlightenment. He refers in the first discourse of the Pali Canon to "inferior matters of mere morality." Rules, even the rules of the monastic system of the Vinaya, are mere "skilful means." They prepare the ground, but, in themselves, are insufficient; they can even become objects of attachment and sources of delusion (e.g., religion). The Buddha warns his disciples against attachment to rules. In the same way, he dismisses the efficacy of rites, rituals, and dogmatic beliefs. The Buddha says, "Cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathagata. They are my pathway and my domain, yet I do not identify with them." Finally, the Buddha provides what Western philosophy has never been able to do – an objective naturalistic ethical basis, the law of moral causality. In the West, the predominant philosophical bias today is that ethics are ultimately arbitrary and irrational. At best, social necessity dictates them. The injunctive "ought" can never be derived from the ontological "is." Thus, ethics in Western philosophy appear to have no real basis.

The Buddha's defence of ethics that arises from these considerations is intensely skeptical. Perhaps, the Buddha argues, there is no rebirth and causality is ineffective. The deterministic Ajivika, the hedonistic Lokayata, and the agnostic Ajnana schools that, like Buddhism, arose out of the

renunciant movement, held these beliefs. Even so, this life establishes the benefits of ethics in terms of both oneself and others. However, if there is rebirth, one gains the merit of a fortunate rebirth. If moral causality is effective, one experiences positive results too. One neither proves nor disproves the practices of ethics and ethical meditation by anything more than what one experiences in the known life. These principles are the four assurances.

The Buddha also teaches the truth of suffering, with reference to past, present, and future. The past and the present are uncertain, the Buddha says. All one knows about is the present moment, the now. The Buddha shows his innate practicality by grounding understanding in what one immediately knows and observes, and then reasoning from the known to the unknown in a progressive way.

From the fact of suffering, the Buddha inquires into its cause. He comes to desirous attachment as the cause of suffering. The other side of desire is "selective compassion," or what Westerners so casually call "love," which means little more today than a serial contract for mutual pleasuring and support. Compassion rooted in attachment contrasts with the universal compassion of one without attachment. The Buddha extends this realization to the past and future. He shows that past states of desirous attachment lead to similar future states. This in turn demonstrates the operation of the law of moral causality. In this way, one builds up one's understanding by grounding it in what one knows. Then one extends it to what one does not, through a dynamic interactive process of exegesis and experience.

Metta Meditation

From ethics, the Buddha proceeds to the meditation on loving kindness. One finds this meditation all through the Pali Canon. The meditator projects the idea of loving kindness to the four quarters, as well as above, below, across, and everywhere, including oneself, "pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with equanimity, vast, exalted,

measureless, without hostility and without ill will." The Buddha echoes the great Galilean bodhisattva, declaring that love and compassion do not exclude kindness toward oneself.

The meditation on the four quarters is a universal practice found in traditions as diverse as shamanism, indigenous spirituality, Vodun, and the Western esoteric traditions, including Cabala and Wicca. For example, the Navajo have a traditional prayer like loving kindness meditation.

As I walk, as I walk,
The universe is walking with me.
In beauty it walks before me.
In beauty it walks behind me.
In beauty it walks below me.
In beauty it walks above me.
Beauty is on every side.
As I walk, I walk with Beauty.

The Navajo also have a tradition of sand painting that scholars have compared with the Tibetan sand painting tradition.

Thus, the Buddha began with what, for lack of a better term, one might call "common sense" – the universally shared experience of all sentient beings. He combines critical examination with inference to expand this understanding into the teaching. The teaching is not a "revelation" handed down by a "deity." Nevertheless, the Buddha credited the divine beings, who (tradition says) visited him in the night, with some of his insights. Others came from the Buddha's own life as a Bodhisattva. The teaching is subject to examination and questioning by reason. Reason itself leads to a "leap" into the transrational and supermundane (reason indicates this too).

The teaching is always growing and changing. Rigid formulations, traditions, or organizations cannot pin it down. Ethics, while fundamental, are not the whole thing. Nevertheless, the path and those who follow it are subject to

ethical evaluation. Thus, the true teaching always has wholesome qualities. Where such qualities are absent, the teaching is not.

However, one must understand "wholesomeness" in an essential way, not with reference to mere social conventions that are geographically and historically relative and contingent. Many, perhaps most, things esteemed by society are unwholesome, especially in this degenerate age. In such a society, many things shunned may also be wholesome. Many things may be wholesome or unwholesome, depending on attachment and intention. For example, many medicines are toxic and therefore unwholesome, but the administration of a medicine in the proper dose and at the proper time, may be wholesome, depending on due regard to the intention and the conditions (such exceptions are allowed for in the Vinaya). All attachment is unwholesome; therefore, attachment to the wholesome is also unwholesome, and can lead to negative effects including suffering.

The ultimate proof of wholesomeness or unwholesomeness lies in ultimate happiness. One must interpret happiness from the absolute perspectives of moral causality and realization, not merely in a temporary or relative way. Therefore, that which leads to the good is ethical, wholesome, and true. Ethics are not detached from experience. The operation of the law of moral causality grounds them. Still, ethics are only the rind of the teaching.

4

The Dharma of Community

The Buddha believed in tradition, fairness, equity, and social justice, as well as skilful intelligence, practical and simple living, and cooperation. It should not be surprising to discover that the Buddha expressed a political philosophy. The Buddha was a member of the ruling military caste by birth. The teaching unites ethics and ontology. If ethics are fundamentally "given," then so are politics. Freedom requires structure to function. The teaching defines the necessary structure of freedom. It is the delusion of the West to think that the absolute freedom of the individual can be a fundamental political principle.

The teaching is not merely the foundation of the spiritual life. It is also the foundation of the ethical life and the life of the householder – life in the world. The teaching is the essential truth of the fundamental core of everything. The teaching includes civil society, politics, and government. How can there be any separation between the spiritual life and the worldly life? The state must have a standard higher than its own power if it is not to fall into tyranny. Therefore, the teaching is the standard of the state, the ultimate authority to which power must yield, the universal authority of truth and righteousness itself. As such, only the individual can enforce it on the individual, and by individuals on each other in their personal immediacy. One can tell the teaching, but one cannot force it. Enforcement is an attempt to hold time in stasis. It is adharmic because it is impossible. The Buddha said that the

imposition of law and order on society by force would never work. The Buddha was anti-military and anti-monarchy.

The dharmic state benefits its citizens and all beings, including animals and the physical environment, through the provision of fundamental protection, shelter, and safety for all. This includes national defence, infrastructure, and police and other legal regulatory authorities.

The Buddha's concept of the state is liberal progressive or social democratic in principle. The state builds and maintains the social infrastructure. It recirculates money through the system to maintain trade based on the common rule of law. The Buddha advocates government control of land, resources, the circulation of money, social redistribution of wealth, and a large public service with generous wages and liberal laws. I think that the Buddha would recognize that social vitality requires a "wholesome" level of competitiveness. But I do not think that he would make competition or money moral absolutes, as it is today. Therefore, they cannot be the essential social or political principles either. Although the Buddha recognized the necessity and even the social value of trade, he distrusted money and business and forbade the monastics from trading or handling money. The Buddha identifies parenting, teaching, family, friends, employees, and students and followers of the spiritual life as activities that the state should protect.

The Buddha held that by providing for the fundamental needs of all, the Buddhist republic would exhibit strong social cohesion. This would make it resistant to decline. The Buddha took as his model of the ideal middle-way society the Vajjian confederacy of northeast India. He applied the same principles to his own order.

The Vajji or Vajjian Confederacy was a notable ancient political commonalty in northeast India during the 5th century BCE. The Vajjians lived to the southeast of the Buddha's own Shakyan country. It was a republic or oligarchic federation of several clans, including the Licchavis,

which were the most prominent. The Vajjian Confederacy was in the region of present-day Bihar, with its capital at Vaishali, which still exists. Vaishali was a significant city and an important center of political, economic, and cultural activities, known as the birthplace of Mahavira of the Jain religion. The Buddha spent considerable time in Vaishali, and he gave his last discourse there. The Vajjians were patrons of the Buddha and his teachings. The Vajjians practised a form of democratic government, with a council that made decisions through discussion and consensus. This contrasted with the more autocratic monarchies that were prevalent in other parts of northeast India. Society organized itself along clan lines, with each clan having its own autonomy but cooperating within the larger confederacy for mutual benefit and defence. The decline of the Vajjians came with their conquest by Ajatashatru of Magadha. After their defeat, the Vajji territories were absorbed into the Magadhan Empire, contributing to the rise of Magadha as a dominant power in the region. The Vajjian Confederacy is an important example of early republican government in ancient India and is significant for its contributions to the political, cultural, and religious history of the region.

The Buddha taught seven principles to ensure the stability of society: collective public decision-making, cooperation, a common law tradition, respect for seniority, respect for women, a vital private spirituality, and a public spiritual organization. Instead, in the West today we find increasing authoritarianism, nationalism, individualism, competitiveness, militarism, ageism, sexism, misogyny, secularism, and materialism. The Buddha's social and political ideas are like those of certain Chinese and ancient Greek ideals. The Buddha's teachings are obviously in the same vein as those of ancient Greece. All lead toward a revolution in thinking that would lead to the transition from the autocracy of the individual king to the autonomy of the universal individual. Thus, the Dalai Lama can say that he is a

Buddhist and a Marxist (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZfd72o0TX0).

The teaching is a spiritual world that exists in the minds and hearts of the citizens of the Buddhist commonweal. Body, speech, and mind exhibit it. The Buddhist community exists in a similar relation to society. The self-vigilance required to follow the teaching in this way is the essence of the system of rules of organization of the Buddhist monastic community, called the Vinaya. If one pursues it with the right attitude, it can become a "skilful means" of spiritual development. The Pali etymology dispels the notion that the Vinaya is essentially ethical. Vinaya means something more like self-control than ethics, although self-control is of course the essential prerequisite of ethics. The actual benefit of the Vinaya is that it imposes a system of "hypervigilance" that in turn facilitates the development of concentration and awareness.

The Buddha's Attitude to Caste

A famous conversation that he had with the Brahman student Assalayana preserves the Buddha's attitude to caste. This took place in the ancient Indian city of Savatthi. It was one of the six largest cities of the Buddha's time. It was located just south of Kapilavatthu. The Buddha's family lived in Kapilavatthu. Assalayana was a kind of Brahman child prodigy. It appears that he secretly favoured the Buddha. His Brahman peers had to pressure him to question the Buddha about what he thought of the Brahman's claim to innate caste superiority.

The Buddha shows the falsity of the Brahmans' claim to be the children of God (literally, 'sons of Brahma'). He also shows the extent of his international political knowledge when he refers to the Greek colony of Bactria on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Buddha shows Assalayana that the Brahmans are subject to the same law of moral causality as all beings. Their rebirth is conditional on the quality of their karma. All beings can commit and experience

good and bad. The Buddha shows that all sentient beings possess the same spiritual potential to purify themselves of negativity. Gradually, the Buddha leads Assalayana to the realization that the qualities that he was attributing to Brahmans as a social class are potentially true of anyone; therefore, the doctrine of innate caste superiority is false.

This story is also a classic example of one of the Buddha's teaching techniques. He leads the inquirer from a question to a new order of understanding by showing the subtle meaning and implications of ideas in a progressive process of logical inquiry and analysis of underlying assumptions and inferences. In the same way, the Buddha found ethical reinterpretations of the traditional Indian ritual practices, like the worship of the six directions: "Then Sigalika the householder's son, having got up early and gone out of [the city] of Rajagaha, was paying homage, with wet clothes and hair and with joined palms, to the different directions: to the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir, and the zenith." In other words, the practice involved rising with the sun and performing a ritual ablution.

It is characteristic of the Buddha's methodology that, after asking Sigalika why he performed this practice (which was because it was the will of his dying father), he explains the practice in ethical terms. Thus, the Buddha reinterprets traditional practices in symbolic terms and adjusts the context of his exegesis – in this case, ethics – to his audience, a householder.

The implication that I have tried to draw is that the basis of the spiritual path proper to the householder is ethical observances and practices that affect his karma. Thus, he can earn merit for his future well-being. But the way of moral causality is not the whole way of the householder. He does not exclude spiritual development as such; the Buddha also recommends the cultivation of faith and wisdom for the householder too. The householder is involved with moral causality. Therefore, karmic observances are of special relevance to him. It is also noteworthy that the Buddha

recommends the cultivation of wisdom to women. Thus, he makes no essential spiritual distinction between male and female householders.

The Buddha attributes the east, the place from which the sun gives light and life, to the parents. The south – the ecliptic, the path of the sun and planets – is the guru. The west, the complement of the parents, is the wife and children, the family. In addition, in the north, the complement of the guru, are friends and companions. The nadir is workers and servants. The zenith is spiritual practitioners and teachers. The Buddha elaborates the ethical implications of this interpretation. Ethical behaviour may affect moral causality directly.

The implication is that what is effective is not the ritual itself. Rather, what is effective is its meaning. In this case, the ethical implication of Sigalika's performance is not the ritual. Rather, it is his pious adherence to the memory of his father. One should not take from this text that the only meaning of rituals is ethical, however.

The Buddha's Attitude to Women

The Pali Canon contains many conflicting statements about women. Bhikkhu Bodhi has noted in his introduction to his translation of the Anguttara Nikaya that more liberal passages in the canon are incompatible with other passages that exhibit hostile views to female monastics and women in general. There are only two possible conclusions: either the Buddha did not know his own mind, or these beliefs are additions to the canon. As for the motives for such an addition, a strong Indian and/or Sri Lankan male monastic tradition is a likely candidate. Indian culture still suffers from a disparaging attitude toward women.

According to tradition, there was a major rift among the male members of the first Buddhist council concerning the ordination of women. We know that this topic divided the male community. Nevertheless, the Buddha clearly intended to institute such an order because he did in fact do so, at least

according to the Pali Canon. The Buddha also showed through his behavior that he wanted the male and female monastics to be equal. Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh discusses this point at length in her article, "The History of the Bhikkhuni Sangha." However, the Vinaya adds eight additional rules to the monastic order for female monastics. The effect of these rules was to submit the female monastics to the authority of the monks. The adoption of these rules appears to have been politically motivated.

The more liberal traditions left in the canon suggest that they are authentic. Tradition established them too well to remove them. The evidence of the canon is that there were many women in the community. The Buddha speaks with and instructs women, apparently on an equal basis with men.

This would explain the widely doubted conversation between Ananda and the Buddha in which the Buddha refused to ordain women, but Ananda had to persuade him to do so, and the Buddha's prophecy that the life of the order would halve from 1,000 to 500 years as a result. Many scholars consider this conversation to be an invention. There are many references to female monastics all through the Pali Canon.

Most likely the Buddha, like Jesus, was far ahead of his time in his attitude to women. You may remember his fondness for women during his time as a Bodhisattva. Ananda was also known for his fondness for women. Probably he freely admitted women to the community, and conversed with them as equals, just as he did with the four castes of the Indian caste system, which he opposed. This seems to be the view of women most consistent with the tone and tenor of the ethical teachings in general, especially concerning caste. Within the community, the only proper separator was seniority.

Perfect Livelihood

Right livelihood is the fifth step in the Eightfold Path. It is the highest step of the middle, ethical section of the Path,

consisting of three steps. Right livelihood specifically addresses the dharmic way of living as a householder. The Eightfold Path begins with Right View and the cultivation of wisdom. This shows that the experience of awakening is not exclusive of the state of a worldling, especially if one accepts Peter Masefield's sequential view of the path, which the discourses also support.

Awakening is sufficient to achieve enlightenment, though not identical with it. Therefore, enlightenment does not exclude the householder. Formal chastity too is not a requirement of awakening. The Buddha commended householders to practise self-restraint and mutual respect. The Buddha praised the love that arises from the state of being married. He declared that such love could bring about a fortunate rebirth in a spiritual world. He also preferred marriage based on love to arranged marriage. The Buddha considered arranged marriage to be a degenerate practice of the Brahmans. He also taught the practice of loving kindness.

If there were any further doubt, the example of King Bimbisara of the Magadha Empire is instructive. Ajatasattu, his son, later assassinated Bimbisara. King Bimbisara was both a householder and a king. Nevertheless, he achieved "stream-entry." Stream-entry is equivalent at least to the attainment of Right View. I have called this state "awakening." Such an individual is automatically noble, if not emancipated. Therefore, he is a member of the noble community, whereas the ordinary community includes worldlings. Dr. Masefield has documented this in detail.

The Way of the Worldling

The Buddha was passing through the market town of Kakkarapatta, in the country of the Koliyans. A man called Dighajanu approached the Buddha. He asked him how he and his people, as lay people and householders, with children and families, engaged in sensual pleasures, could benefit from the teaching, both in this life and in the next. The Buddha, in turn,

taught him four things that lead to satisfaction in this life, and four more things that lead to satisfaction in the next life.

To obtain benefits in this life, the Buddha recommends learning a profession, saving one's money, cooperating with neighbours, and living simply and frugally with self-restraint. To obtain benefits in the next life, the Buddha recommends following the teaching, practising self-restraint, being generous, and cultivating wisdom. He especially recommended the realization of the truth of impermanence and the chain of moral causality. These realizations are widely considered to be the essential realizations that lead to the realization of emptiness and emancipation itself. The Buddha gives the same advice to women. One may use the law of moral causality to benefit oneself in this life and the next. It is also a way of spiritual development that leads directly to enlightenment and not merely to some secondary state.

Living Magically

The law of moral causality on the one hand, including mind in the six sense spheres on the other, gives mind the same ontological status as seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. The recognition of mind as a "sixth sense" results in the realization that the individual can influence their experience of the world, and therefore the world itself, directly through the exercise of intention. Intention is the foundation of merit and the meditation on loving kindness. Therefore, it follows that, by a combination of self-purification and beneficial actions, one can exercise a general influence on one's future destiny. If one accepts that the ordinary householder can do this, how much further can the non-ordinary man take this, the arhant, the bodhisattva, or even the Buddha himself? In Tibet, in the tulku tradition, one can predict or discover the time and place of the future rebirth of a practitioner who has reached a certain level of realization by intuitive methods.

When travelling among the Bhagga people, the householder Nakulapita and his wife, Nakulamata, approached the Buddha. Nakulapita performs an act of truth. He affirms that he has never wronged his wife, even in his mind. By this act of power, he declares the intention that they should be reborn together in their next life. Nakulamata amplifies this act of truth by a second act of truth, identical to her husband's.

Rather than admonishing the couple, the Buddha declares that a couple who has the strong intention to be reborn together should exist in a single harmony of spirit. By the force of their intention, they will achieve their will. The law of moral causality is not something abstract or theoretical. It is vital, powerful, real, and influential. Causality is the force of intention. The "power of truth" is an example of the teaching that developed into Tantra. Keep in mind that this is an ancient text. Along with many other references, it shows that "proto-Tantra" reaches into the deepest strata of the Pali Canon.

This situation is like Christianity. Some Gnostic or proto-Gnostic texts are as old as the canonical writings preserved in the New Testament, to the embarrassment of the Church. The Buddha also declared that this kind of love, which clearly includes romantic love, purified by self-restraint and mutual respect, merits rebirth in a spiritual world, that is, one of the higher, more spiritual realms. Therefore, it may be a spiritual practice.

Anathapindika was the foremost lay follower of the Buddha. He was reborn in the Tusita world as a bodhisattva. Anathapindika's attainment of the "dharma eye" means that he entered the irreversible stream of the path immediately during or just after his first conversation with the Buddha. It refers to the attainment of Perfect View. Anathapindika was a wealthy householder and businessperson. He was a married man with two sons and three daughters. He was not celibate. Subsequently, he became impoverished and predeceased the Buddha.

5

The Way of Karma

In a previous talk, we referred to the teaching "with its dark and bright counterparts." In this talk, once again we meet with the concepts of dark and bright, this time in relation to the law of moral causality. The Buddha refers to four possible combinations of cause/effects: dark, bright, dark and bright, and neither dark nor bright. Of these, the first three cause more effects. The neither dark nor bright is said to lead "to the destruction of karma." The destruction of karma is, of course, the goal of the spiritual path. The Buddha further attributes this realization to "direct knowledge," i.e., gnosis.

Dark causality has dark effects. The Buddha calls these "afflictive." He identifies them with "hellish states," or states of intense suffering and pain.

Bright causality has bright effects. The Buddha calls these "non-afflictive." He identifies them with spiritual states, or states of intense pleasure and bliss.

Dark and bright (or bright and dark) causes are mixed. The Buddha says that these combine afflictive and non-afflictive aspects. He identifies them with human states, as well as lower spiritual and higher animal states, which mix up pleasure and pain.

Finally, the Buddha says that neither dark nor bright causes leads to the destruction of karma. He declares that these are associated with volition or the intention to abandon dark, bright, and mixed causes. In other words, renunciation.

The Buddha says that good causes produce other kinds of effects. Only by giving up negative and positive causes can one go beyond causality itself, and only by going beyond causality is one emancipated. One must transcend good and evil.

The Buddha says that moral causality is not just physical. Moral causality includes verbal and mental actions. But the root factor is not action. Rather, the essential karmic factor is volition or intention, the so-called volitional formations or potentialities. The volitional formations are the second link of the chain of cause and effect, next after ignorance. The Buddha makes this point repeatedly. In fact, the Buddha makes this distinctive contribution to Indian philosophy. Thus, mental actions underlie verbal and physical actions and determine them.

The Buddha describes three kinds of righteous and unrighteous physical actions. He describes four kinds of unrighteous verbal actions. He also describes three kinds of unrighteous mental actions. Altogether, these ten actions produce effects.

The three kinds of physical actions are killing, stealing, and sexual wrongdoing. These ethical principles correspond to the first three of the five precepts. Sexual wrongdoing includes adultery. These forms of abstinence correspond to the positive action of loving-kindness. Right actions became the basis of the Mahayana reinterpretation of Buddhist ethics, in which positive actions transcend abstinence. This relationship is like the distinction between Right Intention and Right Effort, and between the path of the arhant and the path of the bodhisattva.

The four kinds of verbal actions are lying, lying under oath, harmful speech, and gossip. These are variations of wrongful speech. The positive actions that correspond to these are truthful, positive, constructive, and beneficial speech.

The three kinds of mental actions are covetousness, hatred, and wrong view. Wrong view refers to denying the truth of the teaching. Wrong view includes not believing in the law of

moral causality, the existence of other worlds, rebirth, and the reality of spiritual knowledge or gnosis. The positive actions are a positive mental attitude and Right View. Right View is the first step of the Eightfold Path. Right View includes belief in moral causality, other worlds, rebirth, and the reality of spiritual knowledge or gnosis.

The fifth precept is drunkenness. Drunkenness is not included in this list. "Drinking fermented grains that cause heedlessness" seems to be a later addition. The Vinaya does not give it a very prominent place at all, between tickling and playing in water. Today, this precept includes all alcoholic beverages. Buddhist religious include drugs (other than drugs taken for a legitimate medical purpose, which is of course a matter of opinion). However, one often finds the first four precepts grouped together in the Pali Canon without referring to drinking alcohol at all. In this way, one can see how the precepts expanded over time.

The Buddha affirms the ability of the person to affect their future destiny and rebirth by cultivating positive intentions. This includes rebirth in the spiritual realms. This way also develops "the liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, that is taintless with the destruction of the taints." Thus, the Buddha says that one can realize direct knowledge, i.e., gnosis, through intention or volition. The cultivation of wisdom and the destruction of the taints are the positive and negative conditions, respectively.

The Buddha further describes the exact mechanism by which moral causality works. "Unwholesome" causality results in rebirth in non-human, suffering states. "Wholesome" causality results in rebirth in a human state. Human rebirth always results from the fruition of "wholesome" causes. If one is reborn as a human being due to the fruition of positive causes, negative causes may still come about in the human life. In this case, negative effects (experiences) that reflect the quality of the negative cause will undermine the positive rebirth.

The Buddha gives seven examples of good and bad causes and their effects. Killing living beings, injuring living beings, anger and irritability, envy, stinginess, obstinacy and arrogance, and lack of spirituality are associated with shortness of life, sickliness, ugliness, weakness, poverty, low birth, and stupidity, respectively. Not killing living beings; helping living beings; a positive, constructive attitude; good will; generosity; flexibility and humility; and spirituality are associated with long life, health, beauty, influence, wealth, high birth, and wisdom, respectively. The effect corresponds to the good or bad cause.

Results of Positive and Negative Karma

Negative Karma	**Effect**	**Positive Karma**	**Effect**
Killing	Short life	Not killing	Longevity
Injuring	Sickliness	Harmlessness	Health
Ill temper	Ugliness	Kindliness	Beauty
Envy	Powerlessness	Goodwill	Influence
Stinginess	Poverty	Generosity	Prosperity
Obduracy	Low birth	Amenability	High birth
Delusion	Ignorance	Insight	Wisdom

By purging oneself of bad karma by means of abstinence and renunciation on the one hand and cultivating good intentions through the cultivation of merit on the other, one can generate good karma that will yield the effects to which they correspond in the future. But there is no reason one must wait until the next life. If one destroys bad karma and cultivates good intentions, there is no reason one cannot generate good effects in this life too. However, one should not cultivate these causes out of a purely selfish intention (itself a negative cause).

The cultivation of merit is the basis of New Thought, The Secret, and other popular self-help philosophies based on cultivating positive thinking. These ways of thinking are consistent with the teaching if they are undertaken with a

good intention and due regard to existing karmic conditions. However, one thing these philosophies ignore is the need to purge bad effects by means of renunciation and abstinence. Ignoring negativity can lead to serious errors, including false expectations. It does not follow that one will experience the effects of these actions in this life either. They may or may not be effective based on the available conditions in the present and other causal factors operating from the past.

One might ask, does this not contradict the Buddha's view on caste? It seems to follow from the foregoing that one will only be born in a high caste because of good karma. In fact, it is not contradictory. It may be true that only someone with the right karma will be born in a high caste. Moral causality also causes beings born in a low caste. However, anyone can change their karma at any time by exercising volition and intention. On the other hand, the Indian caste system locks one into one's caste for life. Thus, the Buddha does not reject the idea of inferior and superior births or persons. This is absurd. Rather, the Buddha rejects the concept that one cannot change one's moral causality – in other words, that causality is fate. In fact, the Buddha associated with everyone and accepted all castes and genders into the order for just this reason.

All the qualities that we have talked about are qualities of the person or conditions established at birth. These are tendencies to experience rather than experiences as such. The expansion of this way of thinking to include experiences raises problems like the rape or murder of a child or mass disasters like a tsunami or the Holocaust. I am not aware that the Pali texts address these issues specifically. There is some evidence that the Buddha did not think that all effects are the result of intention (Harvey, 2013).

However, the answer may also lie in the intricacy and complexity of the web of interconnections that constitutes the doctrine of the universal interconnectedness of things and the literal infinity of the number of past rebirths. Over infinite time, incredibly intricate combinations of

circumstances can come together in which all the participants appear to share essentially the same fate.

The Buddha summarizes this view of moral causality in the following: "Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior." The word "action" here refers to moral causality.

An interesting but often-overlooked implication is the specific relationship between past and future lives. Some Western, popular, New Age, or spiritualist beliefs tend to see the moral causality of one's present life as a "fulfilment" or positive continuation related to past lives. One is "rewarded" for good behaviour and "punished" for one's mistakes. Such a moralistic view seems to come out of the theistic tradition based on notions of teleology and judgment. They imply that there is a "development" through a series of lives that makes sense and leads towards a goal. Those who think this way often express the goal as acquiring wisdom or insight or the opportunity to express loving-kindness. Sometimes they express this in the notion that one "chooses" each subsequent rebirth to learn some sort of "lesson."

While it is true that cause/effects create the conditions for the arising of future cause/effects, the idea of any meaningful development contradicts Buddhist ontology. First, the world has no beginning. Everyone has lived infinite numbers of lives. Either one has lived and done everything, like Nietzsche's doctrine of "eternal recurrence," or, if reality differentiates infinitely, human experience is limitless. Either way, there is no "divine plan" or telos. There can be no goal where one has lived countless lives.

There is no teleology here. There is no direction and no goal. Rather, there is a chaotic, seething broth. Sometimes this is ecstatic. More often, it is agonizing. In any case, it is purposeless, senseless, and meaningless. Reality has no goal. There is no redemption in, by, or of experience. It is just what it is. Finite beings arise out of this infinite process because,

while it is producing causality, it is also being effective. Each effect automatically negates its cause by exhausting the energy of the underlying potentiality, in an infinitely complex and interactive web of dynamic interrelationships.

Once these causal propensities come to fruition, their energy is exhausted and they effectively vanish. This must be the case; otherwise, there would be infinite numbers of potentialities operating in every moment. In this case, there would be no finite beings. Each moment of experience results from all of those unreified potentialities. Each rebirth is more like a photographic negative of the previous birth than a continuation. For example, a painful human birth may exhaust the negative potentialities, leaving the karmic continuity or mind stream one calls the "self" free to experience the effects of good causes in a very blissful rebirth, perhaps even a birth as a divine being. The reverse may also be true.

The question also arises of what happens to the causal continuity once one achieves fundamental "awakening." Once one achieves true awakening one ceases to generate both good and bad effects. This is the "neither dark nor bright" causality. Thus, only past causes continue to manifest beyond this point. The Buddha says of those who enter the stream that they may experience enlightenment in as short a time as seven days or in as long a time as seven rebirths. The root factor is any potential causes that still exist in awakening. This implies that awakening does not destroy all causes. Even the Buddha continued to experience effects for 45 years after his enlightenment.

Perhaps the phenomenon of authentic, highly realized, but unenlightened, practitioners, who suffer themselves or experience other sorts of strong good and bad propensities, are in fact intensely "working out" the effects of their previous potentialities at an accelerated rate. This might explain such "crazy wisdom" teachers as the homosexual Ramakrishna; the alcoholic Chögyam Trungpa, who literally drank himself to death; the alcoholic and womanizer Gendün

Chöepal; the sex-crazed and abusive Adi Da; and Aleister Crowley, the self-styled "Great Wild Beast," who was the disciple of Allan Bennett, Bhikkhu Ananda Metteyya, who led the first Buddhist mission to the West in 1908, spiritual teacher of Gerald Yorke, the personal representative to the West of the 13th Dalai Lama. Spiritual philosopher Alan Watts, himself an alcoholic who drank himself to death, has a very insightful video on this topic. Of course, I am excluding mere charlatans from this list.

Merit

The Buddha says that he experienced seven eons or world ages in which he was reborn in many spiritual worlds because of practising meritorious deeds and cultivating a mind of loving-kindness in a former life for seven years. He also experienced hundreds of rebirths on earth as a righteous world monarch. The Buddha identifies acts of generosity, self-mastery (also referred to as moral discipline), and abstinence (also referred to as the development of meditation), the fruits of which lead to meritorious rebirths.

The Buddha emphasizes generosity and self-control, leading to favourable rebirths in human or trans-human states characterized by long life, beauty, happiness, fame or good fortune, power and influence, and sublime sensory experiences. The Buddha further declares that confidence in the Buddha, the Eightfold Path, the teaching, and the order are even more meritorious. Gifts of food made to the righteous are especially meritorious. Gifts of food are greater even than gifts of great wealth. They confer long life, beauty, happiness, and strength on the giver. One must give them faithfully, respectfully, at the right time, and with a generous heart, without denigrating oneself or others.

Once again, the Buddha emphasizes that such gifts need not be self-sacrificial or rooted in self-hatred. This is like our discussion of the meditation on loving-kindness. It is ok to love oneself and give oneself good things, if this love is universal and not self-centred. This is only true, however, of

those who are morally pure. For those who are morally impure, generosity alone is not sufficient to obtain a superior rebirth. Once again, the Buddha declares that one can achieve a specific kind of rebirth. The quality of the rebirth corresponds to one's intention. This is especially efficacious at the moment of death.

Ethics

Other actions that produce superior merit include taking refuge in the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Order; not killing or harming; not stealing; abstaining from sexual wrongdoing; abstaining from wrongful speech; and abstaining from drunkenness. In other words, spirituality and ethics are also, like gifts, meritorious causal factors. By these means, one will enjoy freedom from fear, hostility, and oppression.

An even more powerful practice is the observance of the lunar holidays. One may compare observing the new and full moon days to the Judaic practice of Sabbath. Tibetan Buddhists have Tsog offering days, also tied to the cycle of the moon. The phases of the Moon are the basis of the Buddhist practice calendar. Interestingly, the lunar cycle is also central to Islamic spirituality.

The Buddha adapted the Vedic practice of lunar observances for his order. The lunar calendar determines the new and full moon days, especially in the Theravada. It is obvious that this practice is inherently astrological and implies a belief in the spiritual significance of the lunar cycle.

On these days, observers keep the Five Precepts strictly, including celibacy. In addition, the pious eat only a single meal during the waxing of the sun – an Ayurvedic practice believed to bestow good health. They abstain from entertainment and personal adornments and perfumes and avoid the use of high and luxurious beds and seats. These extended ethical practices are the Eight Precepts.

The Buddha says that observing the lunar holidays confers even greater merit on the practitioner than the greatest

worldly benefits. These benefits include long life and spiritual happiness.

Many Buddhists spend these days making offerings to the order. They study the teaching or listen to dharma teachings and meditate. Thus, ethical and spiritual observances that emphasize the inner, spiritual life replace the externalities of Vedic ritual. It is not hard to see how these practices, practised by society, would produce a virtual paradise on earth, a so-called "pure land." This contrasts with what one sees in the world today, where gross selfishness and greed govern human behaviour.

Meditation

The Buddha also discusses meditation, which (he declares) is even more meritorious than ethical observances. We have already discussed the meditation on loving-kindness at some length, so I will not repeat myself here. Concerning this meditation, the Buddha says, "The liberation of mind by loving-kindness surpasses [the ethical practices] and shines forth, bright and brilliant." The Buddha says that the meditation on loving-kindness frees the mind from limiting and constricting causes. One imbues the four directions with a mind of loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity.

Finally, greater even than all the foregoing is the merit produced by realizing impermanence, were it but for an instant. This shows how ontological or existential realizations are even more efficacious than ethical realizations.

Summary

In summary, causes are good, bad, and mixed. One can also cultivate the cause of abstinence or renunciation. Only in this way is causality transcended. Upon awakening, it seems that it is still necessary to work out "unfruited" causal potentials inherited from the past. Thus, the Buddha distinguishes between awakening and final enlightenment. Enlightenment

results in the complete transcendence of rebirth and represents the end of the Path (at least as far as we know). For all we know, enlightened beings may enter a completely new project in transcending rebirth. Such a project might be entirely beyond human comprehension. It is certainly not the teaching of the Buddha that enlightened beings cease to exist in any sense; Buddhism is not nihilist.

Fruited causes disappear, but unfruited causal potentials determine the quality of one's subsequent experiences and the conditions of one's future rebirths. However, causality is not fate. Because of the Buddha-potential that is one's true nature, one is an essentially volitional being, free to choose. The primacy of volition is ontological; reality itself is unconditioned, and therefore absolute. Therefore, although one finds oneself immersed in causality, how one chooses to interact with these conditions is entirely free. That one is essentially free in a causal world is also the proof of our essential divinity. Intention is the ultimate cause of causality. It is also possible to infer our causality from our experiences. This meditation can become the basis of self-improvement. By abstaining from negative causes and purifying negative effects, cultivating positive intentions, and practising detachment and loving-kindness, one can ultimately transcend moral causality altogether, and so improve one's circumstances and ultimately attain emancipation.

To benefit from the accumulation of merit, one must be good intentioned. Bad intentions modify or negate the merit of good actions. One accumulates merit both by performing positive and by avoiding negative actions, offering gifts to the teaching, meditation and other spiritual exercises, and especially by cultivating spiritual realizations and insights. These exercises are not equal. Ethics are the least important. Dharma offerings, spiritual practice, and especially spiritual study and realization produce far greater merit than ethical observances alone. Such actions are extraordinarily efficacious.

The Way of the Arhant

6

The Problem of Samsara

The Buddha unmasked attachment, ego-conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. He laid bare the gratification and danger of the world. The gratification of the world attracts beings to rebirth in the world. The danger of the world attracts beings to transcendence. Although the Buddha realized these truths prior to his enlightenment, he did not claim to have discovered the way leading to the escape from rebirth until he became enlightened. Following his discovery of the way of transcendence, he proclaimed the solution to the problem posed by the dichotomy of gratification and the danger of worldliness.

When the Buddha was staying in Jeta's Grove, in Anathapindika's Park, he discussed these issues with the wanderers of other sects. With respect to the gratification and danger of the world, the wanderers and the Buddha agreed. With respect to how to escape from the world, the Buddha disagreed with the wanderers, stating that they did not understand the way of escape from the world in relation to sensual pleasures, form, and feelings. He declared that their doctrines in this regard were deficient and prone to error. In these respects, the Buddha declared his doctrine superior.

To illustrate this point, the Buddha compared the wanderers of other sects to blind men trying to describe an elephant. According to this famous simile, some blind men

explored various parts of an elephant – the head, an ear, a tusk, the trunk, the body, a foot, the buttocks, the tail, and the tuft at the end of the tail. Limited by their inability to perceive the elephant, the blind men declared the part that they experienced to be the whole elephant. Thus, those who experienced the head declared the elephant to be like a water jar. Those who experienced the ear said that an elephant is like a winnowing basket. Those who experienced the tusk declared the elephant to be like a plowshare. Those who experienced the trunk said that an elephant is like a plow pole. Those who experienced the body said that the elephant is like a storeroom. They all disagreed with each other and, because they disagreed, fell into disputatiousness.

In this brilliant simile, like Plato's famous metaphor of the cave, the elephant is the teaching, and the blind men are those who do not know the teaching or know only one aspect or part of the teaching. Similarly, the adherents of sects, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, see only one aspect. Not knowing the whole, they fall into disputatiousness.

One sees this very keenly in the world today. Muslim fights with Jew, Christian fights with Muslim, Hindu fights with Buddhist, Chinese fight with Tibetans, and Buddhists all fight among themselves, each one convinced that their religion is best, yet everyone sees just part of the whole. In fact, the Buddha says that, because this problem is so acute, it is the major cause of unwholesomeness: "I do not see even one other thing on account of which unrisen unwholesome qualities of mind arise and arisen unwholesome qualities of mind increase and expand so much as on account of wrong view." Our time is not vastly different. The truth of the teaching does not lie in any part, but in the whole. One might call this the perennial or primordial philosophy, the realization that underlying all religions and world views there is one, comprehensive, integral spiritual truth, which can only be discovered by comparing, collating, and reconciling all spiritual beliefs by means of questioning and logical syncretism. This approach leads to its logical

conclusion, the single or universal vehicle, in which one mutually harmonizes and reconciles all dissenting beliefs through a process of comparison, analysis, reconciliation, and transcendence (Jung's "transcendent function").

Samsara literally means 'faring on.' It refers to the process of rebirth, essentially cyclical in nature. Birth gives rise to life. Life gives rise to death, which leads to further rebirth based on unripened karma, in an endlessly recurrent, continuous cycle. The concept of the world is essentially involved with the idea of time. Life, death, and rebirth are a universal process that does not apply merely to human beings. It applies to all living beings. Indeed, it applies to all phenomena. It is the essence of each moment, the essential nature of which is change.

No matter how closely one examines anything, it can be further subdivided into constituent processes and conditions. All phenomena are impermanent and lack indivisible particularity. This recursive deconstruction undermines the very idea of inherent essence. The realization that all things are non-particular and non-local reveals a fundamentally relational and processual ontology. This is not a reification but a de-hypostasization: an ontological affirmation of the doctrine of no-self.

This leads to the realization that all existent things are essentially impermanent and empty, which leads to emancipation. Emptiness is no different from mind or sentience. Ontological emptiness is the essential realization that underlies the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. There is no substantive substrate modified by processes. Rather, process itself is the essential nature of reality. It is rather like the vibrating "rubber bands" of string theory.

The foregoing description of reality leads to the realization that the world itself is essentially infinite both in extent and in duration. Finite objects and experiences precipitate out of this "quantum" reality, but the world itself has no beginning. How can time have an originating moment? How can there be

a time before time? The Buddha says, "this world is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned by beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving." In terms of the law of moral causality, based on the identity of cause and effect, every cause is equally an effect and every effect is equally a cause. There are no uncaused effects, and no ineffective causes. The identity of cause and effect is the basis of the Buddhist rejection of the notion of theism. Theism posits a First Cause, itself uncaused or self-caused. The Buddha realized the self-contradictory nature of a First Cause. If God is self-caused, the Buddha reasoned, why not simply posit the self-caused nature of reality itself? Thus, there is no necessity to posit a creator. Simply posit the beginninglessness of existence as such. In this way, one also realizes the ineffable identity of the world and nirvana, the finite and the infinite.

Despite the Buddhist doctrine of the beginninglessness of the world, the Buddha clearly states that one can transcend the world. Through the realization of one's essential nature, the Buddha-potential, one discovers its essentially mirage-like nature. Thus, one can control karma and thus liberation from it. The transcendence of the world leads to a metaphysical quandary, for, if the world is beginningless, how can it have an end? Let us look at this more closely, in terms of the individual karmic continuity.

Since the world is beginningless, this means that each mindstream is co-extensive with it. The Buddha says,

> *For a long time, monks, you have experienced the death of a father … the death of a brother … the death of a sister … the death of a son … the death of a daughter … the loss of relatives … the loss of wealth … loss through illness; as you have experienced this, weeping and wailing because of being united with the disagreeable and separated from the agreeable, the stream of tears that you have shed is more than the water in the four great oceans. For what reason? Because, monks, this world is without discoverable beginning. … It is enough to experience revulsion*

toward all formations, enough to become dispassionate toward them, enough to be liberated from them.

In other words, transcendence arises within the world because of the experience of the world itself. At some point in this process, out of the blind instinctual craving that is the world, beings achieve a level of complexity where the realization dawns, either because of hearing the teaching or even without hearing the teaching, that the world itself is inherently unsatisfactory. Because of the realization that the world is unsatisfactory, one formulates the desire or intention to escape. Eventually, this desire or intention toward transcendence results in the realization of transcendence itself, and emancipation. The realization itself is identical with the attainment, but this process may take eons to develop, and more eons to be established, consisting of millions or even billions of rebirths, or it may be instantaneous. In either case, it is ultimately attributable to this realization of unsatisfactoriness. Thus, the realization of unsatisfactoriness arises in time and eventually results in the annihilation of time, at least for the individual.

Paradoxically, this realization occurs in time and results in the liberation from time. It is a finite process, and yet the world itself is infinite. The great Dzogchen text, the Kunjed Gyalpom says, "Never having been born, it cannot cease."

Buddhism refers to the three times – past, present, and future. Causality creates this experiential structure. One experiences it as the sequence of cause and effect. However, neither the past nor the future exists, any more than cause and effect exist as separate entities. One imagines that they exist because of memories encoded in the brain. Memories create the perception of past causes. From the notion of past causes, one extrapolates future effects, but memory is just information. It too exists in a single timeless moment, the present.

Paradoxically perhaps, the essential nature of the present is change. One also distinguishes cause and effect. Upon

analysis, one realizes that these are not two things. They too are singular; every cause is also an effect, and every effect a cause. These are all manifestations of the non-dual.

In this way, one realizes that karma itself is singular, momentary, and ever-present. What one calls the karmic continuity or mindstream is just a perception. Therefore, rebirth too is just a perception. It is as illusory as the world itself. This is not to say that rebirth does not occur in an existential sense. The Buddha clearly taught that rebirth is experienced.

One may doubt the historical veracity of the specific rebirths described in the Pali Canon, especially the Jataka tales. These stories are largely Indian folklore. However, the concept itself pervades the canon; it is hard to believe either that the Buddha did not teach this or that he himself did not experience past-life memories. The whole canon attests to the fact that he did. We are not contesting the phenomenon of rebirth. Rather, we are contesting its nature.

Rebirth is right here, right now. It is the essential nature of present, momentary, changeable being. Once one realizes this fact, the whole problem of the world falls away. One is being reborn continuously, right now, right here. The now is all there is. It is the essence of the experience of the present.

The ignorance at the root of the volition or intention to be reborn also exists right here and now as its essential nature. The potential for awakening also exists right here, now, and nowhere else. Therefore, awakening itself also exists right here, now, and nowhere else.

There are an infinite number of these moments; reality differentiates itself infinitely. Just in the time it took to read this talk, I am dying and being reborn countless times. I am not you and you are not me; neither my realization nor my emancipation are yours, nor yours mine; there is a metaphysical point of view; there is individuality. Being singular, it is inherently indestructible and therefore immortal, or "deathless," as the Buddha said. What one experiences as cause and effect is simply the progressive

realization of one's individual relationship with all that is. It defines and limits our momentary experience of the present. It is our "identity," but it is not an isolated self. It is not a 'thing.' It is a process.

The body is no more than an assemblage of such points of view. It is a colony of beings. Karma interconnects all these beings. Extending outward, the body includes all beings ultimately. One speaks of a sequence of such points of view. This is just an illusion. There is only the singular momentary point of view that changes continuously. This dynamic process generates the illusion of time, the world, rebirth, and everything. It is all rooted in volition. The essential nature of reality must be volitional. If it were not essentially volitional, something would condition it, but what can the absolute be subject to other than itself? To be subject to nothing other than oneself is the definition of volition. Thus, to become awakened all that is necessary ultimately is to choose to be awakened, to realize that one is already awakened. One chooses to be what one already is essentially. One needs nothing else. The difficulty of doing this is not because the task is complex. It is because it is simple. In fact, it is the simplest thing in the world.

One might object that this view of the infinitely differentiated now contradicts the Buddha's doctrine of "no-self." But this objection depends on a superficial understanding of what the Buddha was actually rejecting. It is striking, in reading the Pali Canon, how frequently the Buddha refers to the self (attā or attan)—and yet how consistently he refuses to affirm it as anything permanent, autonomous, or ultimate.

The word attā is the Pali form of the Sanskrit ātman, which literally means "breath." According to the Pali-English Dictionary, it was understood in early Indian animistic thought (and elaborated in the Upanishads) as "a small creature, in shape like a man, dwelling in the heart," which "escapes the body in sleep or trance" and survives bodily death as an immortal essence. This is what the Buddha

rejected: not the experience of subjectivity, but the metaphysical reification of that experience into an eternal substance.

The modern English rendering of anattā as "no-self" is misleading. It has led to confusion among English-speaking Buddhists, often giving the impression that the Buddha denied the reality of lived individuality altogether—an absurd conclusion, since here we are, sentient, reflective, and engaged in the very discourse that denies our fixed existence. What the Buddha denied was not the presence of experience, but its imagined permanence. The Buddha denied the hypostasized continuity of the self, not its phenomenal coherence. The sense of "I" arises, but it is a constructed event, not a metaphysical essence.

The Buddhist doctrine of anattā, often translated as 'not-self' or 'no-self,' is perhaps better rendered as selflessness—not in the moralistic sense of altruism, but in the metaphysical sense of the self's insubstantiality. It is not that the self does not appear, but that it does not persist, does not possess essence, and cannot be found in analysis. What we call 'I' is a contingent designation for a stream of causes and conditions—coherent, yes, but ultimately empty.

The English word 'self' comes from the Indo-European root meaning 'separate,' 'apart.' It refers to individuality or the metaphysical point of view. 'Soul,' referring to the spiritual and emotional part of a person, is a much better translation of the Pali word. What the Buddha is denying is the reality of a soul, a living being associated with the heart, separable from the body, permanent, changeless, and intrinsically blissful. The idea of the metaphysical point of view does not correspond at all to the Pali concept that the Buddha rejects. It is more akin to what Mahayanists call the mindstream. This concept resurfaces in Einsteinian relativity in the idea of the four-dimensional continuum. The metaphysical point of view is non-spatial, non-local, non-extended, dynamic, and neither different from nor identical with what one experiences. Although one experiences it as a continuum, its essential

nature is non-continuous and momentary. The mindstream is the transdual reality of the self. It is not identical with the concept of a soul. It is more like the essential idea of proliferation of differentiation.

The fact that all through the Pali Canon he refers constantly to the Deathless shows the absurdity of the notion that the Buddha rejected the idea of a person in any sense. Thus, he clearly posits immortality in some sense. The irreducible is simple, indivisible, permanent, changeless, and blissful. This is the teaching, the object of realization. Change itself posits permanence. To say otherwise is to posit the error of nihilism. The Buddha explicitly rejects this.

The Buddha does not refuse to discuss doctrines like eternalism and nihilism, etc. because he has no theory of ontology. Rather, it is because of the inherently confusing and paradoxical nature of the transdual. Whenever the Buddha seems to reject these doctrines, or avoids their discussion, they are always set up as systems of logical opposites, the so-called tetralemma. This structure indicates the paradoxical nature of the transdual. The transdual must be the essential nature of reality in its ultimate or absolute aspect. The non-recognition of the transdual has become the source of endless confusion, especially among the adherents of the Theravada sect.

7

The Way of Transcendence

The Buddha did not like to answer questions about the world, whether it is eternal or not or whether it is finite or not; the relationship between the soul and the body; and the post-mortem status of a Tathagata. He discouraged speculating about such things. The Buddha said that, instead of speculating, one should work on oneself. This need not imply that the questions have no answers. Thus, the Buddha describes the world; he denies the reality of the soul; he affirms the Deathless. One cannot infer from this passage that the Buddha denies ontology, although it is widely interpreted this way. What the Buddha seems to be criticizing is not the validity of ontology, but rather the soteriological value of a certain mode of questioning, i.e., trying to infer the nature of the transdual from the standpoint of the dualistic reasoning faculty.

In these passages and others, the Buddha presents the alternatives in terms of two or four logical contraries. For example, the statements that (a) after death a Tathagata exists, (b) after death a Tathagata does not exist, (c) after death a Tathagata both exists and does not exist, and (d) after death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist. The Pali Canon repeats this logical construction, called a tetralemma, all through. The Buddha makes it clear that none of these statements is true or false. He does not say there is no truth. Rather, he implies that one cannot realize the truth this way.

Rather, one must work on oneself to discover the actual experience of the transdual. Spiritual realization is essentially non-rational and experiential. One cannot reach it by questioning. Therefore, one cannot reach enlightenment by questioning. The Buddha points toward the answer by indicating that the inquirer should pursue self-knowledge, especially the Four Truths. The Four Truths are not theories but matters of fact subject to immediate experiential verification. By starting with consciousness, one establishes what one knows. Then one can reason from the known to the unknown. Thus, the Four Truths are not merely psychological; they are ontological. Suffering, desire and its cessation, and the path itself exist within an ontological context. They also indicate its nature, and it, theirs. In this way, the Buddha developed a phenomenology of transcendence, not a psychotherapy or relaxation technique. He had to. Spirituality without ontology is incomplete and therefore imperfect. The teaching is perfect.

The apparent denigration of questioning in these passages also reflects a division already present in the ascetic movement between the proponents of wisdom, the cure for ignorance, and the proponents of renunciation, the cure for desire. In time, these separated into the Mahayana and Hinayana schools.

Ignorance is the root of the chain of cause and effect, and desire, the eighth of the intermediate causal links. The proponents of wisdom argued that, since ignorance is the root of the chain of cause and effect, the most effective way to attain enlightenment is to cultivate wisdom directly. Wisdom corresponds to Right View, the first step in the Eightfold Path. The Buddha bases Right View on seclusion, cessation, and dispassion, "maturing in release." A more ascetic school, probably associated with monasticism, held that one should regard the renunciation of craving and purification, exemplified by the Vinaya, as primary.

The primacy of desire seems to underlie the popular view that one finds in many interpretations that the path consists

of ethics and meditation, with wisdom as the goal of enlightenment itself and in that order. Such a view seems to be inconsistent with the Eightfold Path, as pointed out by Dr. Peter Masefield. The Eightfold Path presents meditation as the culmination of a path that begins with wisdom and intention. Ethics or self-control follows this. This view leads to different conclusions as to how the mind ought to be cultivated in the first place, either by developing the mind and the will or by following ethical precepts and practising meditation. The latter is included in the former, but at a later stage. The Dalai Lama discusses the value of knowledge and meditation in relation to each other in an interesting YouTube video. He warns that the practice of meditation, pursued in isolation, without the corresponding development of the mind, can lead to dullness rather than clarity. Perhaps this is why the Buddha said that no path that excludes the Eightfold Path is valid.

The Buddha describes a series of monastics who attain a little. Agitated by the experience of awakening, they fall into various errors. The lowest one falls into the error of pride because of the prestige of becoming a monastic; he denigrates others. The Buddha says that this monk has only attained the "twigs and leaves" of the spiritual life, which he compares to the heartwood of a great tree. The next lowest monastic is attached to morality and becomes self-righteous. The Buddha says that this monastic has attained the outer bark of the spiritual life and stopped there. The Buddha warns against attachment to rules. The preeminent example is Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin and brother-in-law. Devadatta broke away from the Buddha and sought to establish a separate community based on a much more rigid interpretation of the rules than the Buddha. The next monastic is attached to concentration; he becomes arrogant. He has attained the inner bark of the spiritual life. The next monastic achieves knowledge and vision; he looks down on others. His is the sapwood. Finally, the monastic who achieves perpetual emancipation has attained the heartwood of the tree,

enlightenment itself. The Buddha says that there is no falling away from it. It is a qualitative and definitive change of state.

The implication of this story is that the path leading to enlightenment begins with ordination and leads to enlightenment by way of the progressive cultivation of self-control, concentration, and wisdom. In this case, one should not conflate wisdom with emancipation but it is its immediate precursor. Emancipation is a "leap" in which time ceases (i.e., the eternal present of the metaphysical point of view). In the Einsteinian equations, this would mean one is travelling at the speed of light (interestingly, the Dalai Lama associates this with Shambhala). Thus, wisdom is second only to enlightenment. It is also the first step of the Path. This dual view of wisdom creates a paradox.

The Eightfold Path is the subject of the Fourth Truth of Buddhism. It consists of eight steps: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. The Eightfold Path is the template for the practice of the Buddhist path or way, not only in the Pali Canon but also for all of Buddhism. Its purpose is the fading away of lust, abandoning the fetters, uprooting the underlying tendencies, understanding rebirth, destroying the taints, and realizing the fruit of true knowledge and liberation for the sake of gnosis, vision, and final emancipation without attachment. In other words, detachment and wisdom are both the means and the goal.

Right View is formally the knowledge of the truth of suffering, formulated in the Four Truths. Right Intention is the intention to renounce unwholesome intentions. Right speech is the renunciation of lying, gossip, harmful speech, etc. Right Action is the observance of the other moral and ethical norms. Intention, speech, and action correspond to mind, speech, and body. Right Livelihood consists of earning a living by ethical means, implied in Right Action. Right Livelihood prohibits Buddhists from trading in weapons, human beings (i.e., slavery and prostitution), flesh (i.e.,

breeding animals), intoxicants, and poisons. Right Effort is the desire and effort to cultivate wholesome actions, apparently an intensification of Right Intention. Right Mindfulness is clarity of consciousness with respect to the experience of body, mind, and phenomena. Right Concentration refers to the practice of meditation, consisting of seclusion, the cultivation of awareness, and mental concentration leading to the four meditative states.

There are several things worth noting about this presentation of the path. First, the Pali word sammā, often translated as 'right,' conveys a deeper meaning which underscores that each step of the Eightfold Path must be fully realized in its entirety before moving on to the next. This challenges the common interpretation of the Path as a linear progression from an inferior to a superior state. Some might reduce Right View to an intellectual exercise or a simple formality, but such an interpretation misses the point that Right View is a profound, transformative realization, not just a concept to be learned. The Eightfold Path is not merely about adhering to external rules or steps; it's about genuine, lived experience and transformation at every stage.

Dr. Peter Masefield makes a similar point with respect to the translation of ariyan in the context of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. While dictionaries typically render ariyan as 'noble,' Dr. Masefield criticizes this translation and suggests the term 'supermundane' instead. Similarly, Harvey (2013) translates Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path as "True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled" and "Noble Eight-Factored Path" respectively. By this, he emphasizes the extraordinary, transcendent nature of the Path, to highlight the depth and transformative nature of the Path, which cannot be approached casually or as a mere formality.

View refers to an awakening by which one experiences the truth of the teaching as direct intuitive certainty. View excludes the perfection of the will; otherwise, the Path would not need to refer to Intention. Since it is will, volition, or

intention that underlies moral causality, the establishment of View alone cannot mean that one no longer generates karma. The canon also refers to this experience as "opening the dharma eye."

By this experience, one becomes a student. One wonders about the notion that View automatically means that one becomes a stream-enterer (or stream-winner). A stream-enterer will attain enlightenment and has ceased to generate new causes and effects. Karmic non-generation could only be true of the aspirant who had perfected his intention. Of course, the perfection of view logically leads to the perfection of intention, so perhaps the distinction is merely semantic.

One might compare View with the Christian concept of conversion (metanoia). Nevertheless, the attainment of View is far more than a conversion in the common sense. Technically, View is a qualitative transformation of the mind. One might understand the Eightfold Path as a progressive refinement of a substance, such as gold, which has already gone through a fundamental transformation but none of its changes defile it. This is the meaning of the "graduated path." It is the hypostatization of a potential that manifests in the first step and is always present in essence.

All wisdom traditions of the world report the "awakening" experience. What is unique to Buddhism is that the central aspect of View consists of a deep realization of the truth of suffering, including its cause and cure. This realization is the immediate trigger of the realization of View. Elsewhere, the Buddha says that the realization of change is the decisive experience of his enlightenment. Still others mention awareness of the breathing. All these things are interrelated; all lead to the comprehensive and essential realization of emptiness, emancipation, and finally the "leap" into the transdual itself. Masefield quotes a passage in which the Buddha says, "'Right view races on ahead,' which it does according to the commentary, 'in order to prepare the path'" (p. 39, quoting the Samyutta Nikaya i.33). It is, as it were, a decisive glimpse of a future attainment.

Therefore, it follows there are at least two distinct transformative states, perhaps more: an initial awakening followed by enlightenment or emancipation. Enlightenment and emancipation can be further differentiated with reference to the Buddha's enlightenment at the age of 35 and his '"final emancipation" at the age of 80. We have also referred to an illumination or kundalini-type experience that he had while still an ascetic. In addition, there is the intimation of his childhood experience under the rose-apple tree.

The Eightfold Path is clearly a sequence of steps. Nevertheless, the conventional order of the path begins with the cultivation of ethics or self-control. The cultivation of meditation follows ethics, culminating in wisdom as the effect of the practice of the foregoing. This influential threefold classification is attributed to the nun Dhammadinna (Culavedalla Sutta). Convention hardly mentions intention and effort. The actual order of the path as presented by the Buddha (I do not believe any texts present the Eightfold Path in any other order) proceeds from the establishment of perfect wisdom to the will to attain to self-control (speech, action, and livelihood) to cultivating wholesomeness. The path culminates in meditation, consisting of energy, awareness and concentration. The sequential view of the Eightfold Path presents a different picture of the path than the usual presentation by those who might wish to make the observance of Vinaya the foundation of the path and meditation its exclusive spiritual practice, with little emphasis on study. However, this can lead to an imbalance that can lead to delusion.

Another noteworthy point is the inclusion of Livelihood in this very august list. This shows that the householder can pursue the path as such; a monastic cannot practise livelihood, strictly speaking, since a monastic may not work. The only possible conclusion is that the Path is not reserved for a monastic elite, but for a spiritual elite that includes both monastic and lay Buddhist practitioners. The noble

community exists within and above the ignoble community. The Buddha recommended the practice of meditation to both householders and women.

The Buddha also addresses the thorny question of who can teach. He had already devolved the formula of ordination to the monks. This made the Buddhist community a decentralized, if not perfectly flat, social network. In accord with the Buddha's last words, the community did not become truly hierarchical until after his death, when they instituted a hierarchy based on seniority.

The Buddha states that anyone who has attained the first meditative state may teach. Implicitly, this assumes that wisdom and self-restraint have already been mastered, as these qualities are foundational to the path and precede the attainment of deeper meditative states. On the other hand, the first meditative state is primarily a mental state, characterized by the presence of thinking, rapture, and the pleasure of seclusion, rather than being purely cognitive or intellectual in nature.

Two Ordinations

When Ananda suggested that the spiritual life consists half of "virile effort" and half of the companionship of good friends and comrades, the Buddha declared the companionship of good friends and comrades to be the entire spiritual life! The community is egalitarian. The Buddha says that, to achieve such an order, the members must rely on each other as they rely on the Buddha himself; everyone teaches everyone else. The community venerates the Buddha, less as an idol than as an equal, "by relying upon the Buddha [also] as a good friend." The community also shared property equally, like the inhabitants of Uttarakuru.

Nevertheless, the Buddha ordained other recluses as though he were releasing them from the household life into homelessness. The ascetics say to the Buddha, "We were very nearly lost, we very nearly perished, for formerly we claimed that we were ascetics, though we were not really ascetics; we

claimed that we were Brahmins though we were not really Brahmins; we claimed that we were arhants though we were not really arhants. But now we are ascetics, now we are Brahmins, now we are arhants."

The Bodhisattva began his spiritual career as a recluse. This inverts the relationship of Gotama to the group of five ascetics with whom he started. They rejected him because, being close to death, he violated his vow of abstinence (in their view) by eating some rice pudding offered to him by a village girl, Sujata. Sujata believed that he was the spirit of the tree under which he sat. Now the Buddha is receiving the ascetics into the homeless life. The interaction is clearly a kind of initiation or transmission. It includes elements of supplication, characterized by humility and contrition; conversion; and usually some instruction by the Buddha (the so-called "dharma in brief"). An acceptance and a sending forth follows the transmission, in what appears to be a formalized practice.

The ascetics were recluses. They were the yogis of other non-Vedic schools who, like the Buddha, were hostile to the Brahmans. They came to the Buddha and accepted his teaching. He in turn recognized them and accepted them into the order. Then they go forth into seclusion, apparently from the community as well, often to attain emancipation.

The Buddha seems to have instituted two parallel formulas of ordination, including an extended community. A reclusive elite lived between society and the community. One thinks immediately of the Tibetan mahasiddhas of the 8th to 12th centuries. A similar tradition survives today among the Thai forest monks. Admission to the extended community appears to have been highly decentralized and relatively easy. Admission to the noble community appears to have been the prerogative of the Buddha and, perhaps, his closest disciples.

Such recluses must have lived on the edge of society. They still engaged in alms gathering; therefore, they could not have been utterly solitary. Even Kondanna, the Buddha's first disciple, did not live so far that he was unable to travel on foot

to the Buddha and worship his feet before returning to his Himalayan retreat. There he died the next day. The texts imply that the imminent death was the reason for the visit, so it could not have been far. These recluses practised the last three steps of the Eightfold Path –Effort, Mindfulness, and Concentration. They lived alone in clearings, forests, and other secluded places.

The practice of meditation leads naturally to progressively subtle states of mind. This culminates in the realization of sentience, mind, emptiness, concentration, and bliss – the "divine eye" of the "pure bright mind." Commonly referred to as Luminous Mind, this is a clear precursor of the Mahayana doctrine of the Clear Light.

He realizes his identity with all other beings. He understands his former births and the mechanisms of moral causality and rebirth. A key point is the repeated statement that one realizes all these states in and with the body. The Buddha rejects the theory of a soul that separates from the body. However, the Buddha does not deny the reality of meditative states of mind. Since the soul does not dissociate, one can only experience these states in the body. Realizing the nature of reality, he achieves transcendence and experiences the direct and intuitively certain fact of liberation. This group may have been the nucleus of what became the community of saints.

Another place to which the Buddhist recluses retired was the charnel ground. The Indian charnel ground was not a pleasant place. The remains of corpses in all stages of decomposition filled it. Some still had pieces of cloth clinging to them, which the early Buddhist recluses gathered, pieced together, and sewed into robes. Ascetics survived on the food offerings left for the dead by relatives and friends.

The standard period of meditation in a charnel ground was twelve years. Padmasambhava completed the charnel ground meditation more than once. Meditating in charnel grounds was a pan-Indian practice. Non-Buddhist recluses outside the Brahman orthodoxy also observed it. Recluses must have

included proto-Shaivite and proto-Tantric practitioners. They also practiced sleep deprivation (four hours per day) and fasting. Here is more evidence of a proto-Tantric thread in early Buddhism.

Meditating in a charnel ground brings one face to face with the reality of human existence, with a bodily immediacy of transformative power. Such practices appear to have been reserved for an elect within the Buddhist community. They requested permission from the Buddha to go forth. They also gained inspiration from a personal encounter with the Buddha himself. Not only monastics approached the Buddha in this way. Householders too "went forth." Some achieved enlightenment after a relatively brief time.

Summary

In summary, the discussion of the Buddhist way of transcendence involves questions concerning the ontological status of enlightenment, the role of questioning, the role of rationality, and the nature of the human state. The Buddha said that asking and answering such questions would not lead to the desireless state. Nevertheless, the Buddha himself asked and answered such questions in a 45-year conversation with anyone who cared to approach him.

The Eightfold Path begins with the cultivation of perfect wisdom. The Buddha describes the world; he denies the reality of the soul; he affirms the Deathless. The Buddha recognized that reason could only lead so far. A "leap" into the void follows the mastery of reason. One must cultivate reason to transcend it. Ignorance is the root of the chain of causality. The direct cognition of transdual reality can induce an intellectual simulacrum of the experience of transcendence that can trigger the Buddha-potential resulting in complete transcendence.

By cultivating the appropriate qualities, anyone can achieve awakening, ultimately. The realization of the ubiquity of suffering leads to the deep ontological realization of suffering, change, and emptiness. This definitive

transformation of state makes one a student of the teaching. It sets one on the path that leads inevitably to enlightenment. It is subject only to the contingency of "unripened" causes. The attainment of View is not absolute. It is only the first step, decisive though it is. Volition is always present. Therefore, one can still deviate from the path at any time prior to complete and perfect enlightenment, which is a qualitative change of state from which there is no return.

The community includes the ignoble and the noble, as suggested by Dr. Masefield, thus creating a community within a community. Although it is the culmination of the path, many people, including householders, may practise meditation beneficially. It is not secret. Enlightenment consists in the attainment of the Divine Eye of the Luminous Mind. There is no soul. One experiences all spiritual realizations in the body. All are immediate, certain, and blissful. Enlightenment is not affectless. It is a state of deep and abiding bliss.

8

The Art of Meditation

Buddhism is primarily a method of mental cultivation. The Buddha says that there is nothing as unwieldy, harmful, and prone to suffering as an undeveloped mind; there is nothing as wieldy, beneficial, and prone to happiness as a developed mind. Mental development or self-cultivation entails two things primarily – serene mental concentration and awareness. The development of serenity leads to the stilling of lust, craving, or attachment and develops the mind. The development of awareness leads to wisdom and the abandonment of ignorance, the root cause of the chain of cause and effect. The combination of serenity and awareness leads to the realization of the Eightfold Path, and thence to enlightenment itself.

The development of serenity and awareness are the two essential requisites of the path. All spiritual methods or techniques, no matter how apparently complex, are ultimately reducible to either one or the other or some combination of the two. Ananda, the Buddha's main disciple, identifies four possible combinations: serenity followed by awareness, awareness followed by serenity, the progressive alternation of serenity and awareness, and a rather interesting one – anxiety or agitation, spontaneously resolved by the arising of serenity and awareness through some sort of spiritual crisis. Bodhi glosses this crisis as the spontaneous arising of awakening. One may compare this concept with the great European mystic George Gurdjieff's

concept of the "shock" or Padmasambhava's concept of the "leap" by which one achieves a fundamental change of state. Chan Buddhism calls this "instantaneous enlightenment," which became the basis of the argument between the gradualists and the subitists. Jesus also alludes to such a state in the Gospel of Thomas (Log. 2). Ananda declares that these are the only ways to experience emancipation.

The Buddha identifies four types of people: one who gains internal serenity of mind but does not gain the higher wisdom of awareness into phenomena; one who gains the higher wisdom of awareness into phenomena, but not the internal serenity of mind; one who gains neither; and one who gains both. Thus, one should approach one who has developed the faculty or realization in which one is lacking for instruction on how to develop that realization. One who has developed both should establish themself in them, as well as applying themself to the further destruction of the taints. The PED states that the taints consist of attachment to 'sensuality,' 'rebirth,' and 'ignorance.' The commentaries added a fourth taint, which the PED translates as 'speculation' or 'wrong view,' to the list several centuries later.

In the context of memorizing the teachings, the Buddha identities lust, anger, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt, as factors that disturb the equanimity of the mind and so inhibit memorizing and, by implication, studying the teachings. These are the five hindrances. The hindrances disturb the mind and make it impossible to recognize its true nature.

The Buddha compares the refinement of the mind to the process by which gold is refined. Gold is a metaphor for the inherent lucidity of sentience itself. One washes, rinses, cleans, and finally melts gold in a formula suggestive of European alchemy, explored deeply by C.G. Jung, for example. The reference to melting is especially interesting. One of the popular notions about Buddhism is that it is passive, but one finds references all through the Pali Canon to the cultivation of will and the development of energy (or "virile force") as

essential elements of the path. The Buddha himself was described as a virile "bull of a man." The sexual potency of the male monastics is emphasized. Here these metaphors go even further. If gold is the mind, what does melting the mind mean? Compare the Tibetan concept of tummo or "psychic heat," analogous to kundalini, tapas, or even ch'i (qi).

Pure gold, originally brittle, becomes pliant, workable, and bright. The notion of mental pliancy pervades the Pali Canon.

The Buddha says, "there comes a time when [one's] mind becomes inwardly steadied, composed, unified, and concentrated. That concentration is then calm and refined; it has attained full tranquility and achieved mental unification; strenuous suppression of the defilements does not maintain it. Then, to whatever mental state realizable by direct knowledge he directs his mind, he achieves the capacity of realizing that state by direct knowledge, whenever the necessary conditions obtain." The scientific precision of this statement is remarkable.

The Buddha refers to various mental powers or psychic abilities. One may develop these abilities by means of meditation. They include bilocation, invisibility, levitation, passing through matter, travelling cross-legged through the sky, mastery of the body, clairaudience, clairvoyance, telepathy, and remembering past lives, both of oneself and others. Yogis also attest to these powers. Techniques to develop them were highly developed by the Tibetans in particular.

Whether one accepts these powers literally or as psychic experiences, the literature of parapsychology teems with many accounts of similar experiences and abilities. It is hard for Westerners to appreciate how far such powers may be developed, since there is nearly no culture for their development in our secular materialist society. Nevertheless, over the past hundred years, science itself has gone far beyond the materialist description of the world.

It seems more cogent to accept the reality of psychic powers, at least provisionally, than to reject them altogether

as mere fabrications. The Pali Canon refers to the creation of a "mental body." Most of these "psychic powers" can be experienced in an advanced dream or psychedelic state, to which they may refer. The Pali Canon enumerates specific individuals in the ancient community to whom the Buddha attributed such powers. Westerners tend to reject such abilities dogmatically, but are the reality of curved space, time dilation, atomic energy, multiverses, the quantum act of observation, strings, black holes, virtual particles, singularities, the big bang, the holographic universe, or artificial intelligence (AI) any less fantastic? All of these are commonplaces of 21st century science and will define the Buddhism of the future.

As an aid to meditation, the Buddha recommended attending to an image or "sign" that opposes any distraction. One can counteract evil, unwholesome thoughts, such as hatred, desire, and delusion, by concentrating on some sign connected with what is wholesome. In this way, the mind becomes steadied, composed, unified, and concentrated.

Bodhi gives examples of the kinds of signs that the Buddha recommended in specific situations. For example, one can counteract sensual desire by contemplating the unattractiveness of the body. One can counteract desire toward inanimate objects by contemplating change. One can counteract hatred toward living beings by contemplating loving-kindness. One can counteract hatred toward inanimate objects by meditating on the elemental nature of things. One can counteract delusion by studying the teaching.

If, after meditating on these signs, the distraction persists, the Buddha recommends meditating on the danger inherent in the distraction. If one continues to be distracted, the Buddha recommends simply ignoring the distraction. If the distraction continues, the Buddha recommends inquiring into its causes in an indefinite succession leading to subtler and subtler causes, culminating finally in quiescence. Finally, and only if the distraction continues, the Buddha recommends "crushing the mind with the mind," or forcibly

repressing the distraction through sheer force of will and determination. The Buddha says, "this monk is called a master of the courses of thought. He will think whatever thought he wishes to think and he will not think any thought that he does not wish to think." Note however that repression is the Buddha's last resort.

Similarly, no matter how people speak to you, the Buddha recommends remaining indifferent and responding to them with an altruistic mind. As in the loving-kindness meditation, one expands that intention outward from that individual to all individuals and ultimately to all living beings and thence to the universe, even, to use the Buddha's metaphor, "if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw." Jesus famously recommended plucking out one's eye or cutting off one's hand in similar circumstances.

For one who is on the path, the Buddha recommends contemplating the Buddha, the Teaching, the Order, morality, generosity, and the divine beings. One takes these things as objects of one's concentrated attention. The qualities of the object of the meditation arise in the mind of the meditator, resulting in inspiration, gladness, rapture, calm, happiness, and concentration. Meditations on the Buddha and the divine beings became important practices within Tibetan Buddhism.

The Buddha declares the Four Foundations of Awareness to be the essential elements of the path that leads inevitably to emancipation. One establishes each step, once acquired, in a progressive direction that cannot be reversed (the so-called "one way"). (I follow Bodhi's interpretation here.) The path is negentropic, as distinct from the entropic nature of the world, which leads to ever-greater degeneration.

The four foundations of awareness are awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena, in an ascending arc that leads from the particular to the universal and from the gross to the subtle. Body corresponds to the element of earth, feelings to the element of water, mind to the element of air, and finally phenomena to the element of fire, i.e., the dynamic

principle of causality. One can establish awareness of the body by means of seclusion, sitting, and cultivating awareness of the breath, the life force of the body, embodied in the Indian concept of soul.

The Buddha emphasizes the importance of cultivating a global awareness of the body. Meditation is not a state of dissociation. Awareness may be extended to the posture, and finally to the comprehension of the three marks or characteristics of existence (change, suffering or unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness).

One undermines attachment to the body by analyzing the body into its elements, viz., hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones and marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine. The nine charnel ground meditations include contemplating one's body in various states of decay. These contemplations include a bloated corpse, a corpse devoured by animals, a desiccated skeleton, and finally a pile of disintegrating bones.

The corpse meditations bear a striking resemblance to the Chöd cult of Tibetan Buddhism. The practitioner visualizes their own body and offers their flesh as the offering at a tantric feast. Iconographically, the skin of the practitioner's body represents illusory surface reality. One cuts it from bones that represent the true self.

Bodhi suggests that these practices may involve visualizations of the body in the various states. However, advanced Buddhist adepts also practised the charnel ground contemplations in actual charnel grounds, which must have been extraordinarily psychologically powerful.

Contemplation of the feelings is simply being aware of the pleasurable or unpleasurable state of one's feelings, without attachment. In contemplating the mind, one replaces the awareness of feelings with awareness of one's own mental state.

Contemplation of phenomena involves awareness of phenomena in terms of the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six senses, the seven enlightenment factors, and the Four Truths. This means being aware of attachment to phenomena, change, sense perceptions, one's state of realization, and suffering.

Recognizing the factors of enlightenment within oneself is included in the contemplation of phenomena because this refers to an objective recognition of the ontological status of one's realization. Realization is not subjective. Enlightenment is not a subjective quality or state any more than the bliss or rapture of enlightenment is a "feeling."

The Buddha states that the practice of the four foundations of awareness over a period of seven years leads to stream-entry. One either achieves final enlightenment immediately or is reborn in one of the Pure Abodes. From here, one attains enlightenment directly, with no more human rebirth. Rebirth in the Pure Abodes is the one rebirth in the world that the Buddha says he never experienced. To be reborn there means that one is never reborn as a human being. The Buddha goes on to say something very remarkable:

> *Let alone seven years, monks. If anyone should develop these four establishments of awareness in such a way for six years … for five years … for four years … for three years … for two years … for one year, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, nonreturning. Let alone one year, monks. If anyone should develop these four states of awareness in such a way for seven months … for six months … for five months … for four months … for three months … for two months … for one month … for half a month, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, nonreturning. Let alone half a month, monks. If anyone should establish these four establishments of awareness in such a way for seven days, one may expect one of two fruits: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning.*

This passage repeats all through the Pali Canon. It directly contradicts the common assumption that enlightenment is an exceptional achievement that takes hundreds and thousands if not millions of rebirths to achieve. One finds this assertion repeated endlessly in the popular Buddhist literature. We have already alluded to the evidence of householders achieving awakening, and even final emancipation, after a brief period.

The Theravada interpretation of this fact is that these individuals were associated with the Buddha in past lives. These advanced practitioners were already on the verge of awakening. Perhaps, but this quotation suggests that this is not the whole explanation. The implication is clear. Establishing oneself in the four foundations of awareness leads to awakening at least after no more than seven years, but may result in awakening, and even final emancipation, almost immediately, if the karmic conditions are proper.

There are examples in the canon of householders achieving final enlightenment within five days of "going forth." The passage quoted is clear. Awakening is not the exclusive prerogative of a special elite of reborn prior associates of the Buddha. To repeat, "if *anyone* [emphasis added] should establish these four establishments of awareness in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of attachment left, non-returning.

Ananda's Riddle

Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant, presents a riddle to the Buddha. This is a rare instance of an actual riddle in the Pali Canon. Of course, riddles became a popular pastime in certain sects of Zen Buddhism, the so-called koan, which may be regarded as a variation of the "pointing out" instruction in Dzogchen. In any case, the riddle is: "Is there one thing that, when developed and cultivated, fulfils four things? And four things that, when developed and cultivated, fulfil seven things? And seven things that, when developed and

cultivated, fulfil two things?" It is curious that Ananda presents this riddle to the Buddha, and not the other way around.

The Buddha's answer is that concentrating on breathing is the one thing that, when developed and cultivated, fulfils the four establishments of awareness – body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. The four establishments of awareness, when developed and cultivated, fulfil the seven factors of enlightenment – awareness, discrimination, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. The seven factors of enlightenment, when developed and cultivated, fulfil true knowledge and liberation. Wisdom and emancipation are set against each other as co-determining factors, like the co-determination of consciousness and "name and form" in the chain of cause and effect. The text emphasizes the preeminent importance of wisdom in the realization of emancipation.

It is interesting that the "one thing" in the sequence is not the goal, but rather the means, awareness of breathing.

Awareness of breathing is the essential technique. Specifically prescribed for restlessness, Bodhi notes that the Nikayas recognize awareness of breathing as a technique of fundamental importance. The importance of breath meditation is due to the pan-Indian association of the breath with the vital life force associated with the soul. Even though the Buddha repudiated the metaphysical doctrine of a soul as such, he still emphasizes the breathing meditation technique itself.

The Buddha declares that awareness of breathing is the essential meditation by which he attained enlightenment. Even after attaining enlightenment, during his 45-year teaching career, the Buddha continued to practise awareness of breathing in retreat. He uniquely refers to this technique as "the Tathagata's dwelling." It is significant that the Buddha continues this practice, even after becoming a perfected being. The development of awareness of breathing underlies all four establishments of awareness. It constitutes the universal underlying technique leading to the seven factors

of enlightenment and thence to wisdom and emancipation itself.

The thirty-one planes of existence are also levels or stages of realization. There is no ultimate distinction in Buddhism between macrocosm and microcosm, the universal and the individual, ontology and psychology, reality and mind. The three realms of reality are the worlds of desire, form, and formless mind.

The form world consists of four sets of three worlds and five Pure Abodes. The four formless worlds supersede these worlds. The form and formless worlds correspond to the four meditative attainments, followed by the realization of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception. Altogether, there are eight successive stages of realization.

The Bodhisattva achieved the realization of the state of nothingness under his first teacher, Alara Kalama. He realized neither perception nor non-perception under his second teacher, Uddaka Ramaputta. Although the meditative attainments are associated with the last step of the Eightfold Path, Perfect Concentration, lay people can attain the meditative attainments. Thus, the Eightfold Path is not the prerogative of monastics.

The first meditative attainment is the lowest. The first meditative attainment corresponds to Mahabrahma with his minsters and retinue, a kind of divine kingdom. The king of this kingdom is the Great Brahma. Great Brahma is a divine being originally from the next highest level who has been reborn in the brahma worlds due to loss of merit. Devolution is the fate that befalls all divine beings, since despite their high spiritual status they are still imperfect. Human beings themselves have descended from a divine realm.

One may simply regard Great Brahma as God. He is famous for his delusion that he is the creator of the universe. This idea is like the Gnostic view of the Biblical Yahweh, who is regarded as a demiurge or false god. The attainment of the first meditative state is essentially equivalent to the religious

goal of reaching "heaven." Residents of the Brahma realms can enter our realm and interact with us. They visited and spoke with the Buddha at night. Communicating with divine beings during extended periods of seclusion is common in the Tibetan tradition.

The second meditative attainment corresponds to three worlds of radiance.

The third meditative attainment corresponds to three worlds of glory.

The worlds beyond the meditative attainments are split into infinite space and infinite consciousness; nothingness; and the opening to the transdual. These are the Four Formless Worlds, consisting only of mind. This structure suggests the Cabalistic conception of Ayin, nothingness; Ein Sof, limitlessness or infinite space; and Ohr Ein Sof, limitless light, followed by ten worlds of being (the sefirot). This diagram is called the Tree of Life (Etz Chaim). It is the fundamental ontological structure of the Hebrew mysticism called Cabala. Similarly, Buddhist cosmology simplifies the 31 planes of existence into 10 spiritual realms, viz., hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, anti-gods, humans, devas, dharma hearers, solitary buddhas, bodhisattvas, and full buddhas.

One attains the first meditative attainment by withdrawing from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states. This state is still cognitive, combined with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion.

With further practice, the cognitive aspect of the first meditative attainment drops away. The arising of confidence and unification of mind without cognition, and the rapture and happiness born of concentration, characterizes it. This is the second meditative attainment.

With further practice, the quality of rapture disappears. Equanimity, awareness, and clear comprehension arise, accompanied by happiness in the body. This is the third meditative attainment.

With further practice, pleasure and pain (i.e., of the body) and joy and displeasure disappear. The purification of

awareness by equanimity characterizes it. This is the fourth meditative attainment.

With further practice, the perception of form, sensation, and diversity completely disappear. One realizes infinite space. This is the first of the four formless worlds.

With further practice, the realization of the infinity of space disappears. One realizes that consciousness is infinite. This is the second of the four formless worlds.

With further practice, the realization of the infinity of consciousness disappears. One becomes aware that there is nothing. This is the third of the four formless worlds.

Finally, with further practice, the realization of nothingness disappears. One enters a transdual state of neither perception nor non-perception. This is the fourth of the four formless worlds and the highest worldly state.

None of these states is identical with complete emancipation. True emancipation is beyond them all.

9

The Cultivation of Wisdom

In previous talks, we discussed the importance of wisdom in the spiritual quest. However, what kind of wisdom is this? The Buddha compares wisdom to the lights of the moon, sun, and fire; he declares the light of wisdom to be greater than these. In a remarkable simile, in a sermon presented, not to monks, but to nuns, the Buddha compares the supermundane wisdom of the teaching to a butcher's knife "that cuts, severs and carves away the inner defilements, fetters, and bonds just as the butcher cuts, severs, and carves away the inner tendons, sinews, and ligaments of a cow." This striking simile is remarkable, in the context of the universal Indian veneration for the cow and the quasi-tradition of Buddhist vegetarianism (I say "quasi," because the Buddha never made vegetarianism mandatory).

The Indian reverence for the cow must be very ancient. The Rigveda says, "[t]he fiend who consumes flesh of cattle, with flesh of horses and of human bodies, who slaughters the milk producing cow, O Agni, tear off the heads of such with fiery fury." Nevertheless, the ancient brahmans also sacrificed cows and ate their meat in a ritual context. The Buddha's words must have struck the ears of his listeners as a powerful and even offensive metaphor. Perhaps he designed to offend the Brahmans, to shake them up, who the Buddha criticized openly, often, and severely. The Buddha may also have been calling attention to the sacred context of this ritual slaughter, not unlike the Western notion of "eucharist."

Perfect View

The Buddha identifies eight conditions for developing true wisdom. These conditions include an attitude of reverence toward a teacher. The teacher may include a fellow monk – another indication of the Buddha's egalitarianism. Also included are receiving teachings from a teacher; physical and mental withdrawal; ethical self-restraint; investigating and penetrating the teachings; effort directed toward abandoning the unwholesome and cultivating the wholesome; not engaging in rambling and pointless talk, either talking about the teaching or keeping silent; and deeply realizing the truth of change.

When asked, "What is Perfect View," synonymous with the realization of wisdom, Sariputta, renowned as the arhant foremost in wisdom, identifies sixteen realizations. These realizations constitute Perfect View, viz., understanding the root of the wholesome and the unwholesome; the four "nutriments" so-called, which include food, contact, volition, and consciousness; the truth of suffering; ageing and death; birth; existence; attachment; desire; feeling; contact; the six senses; name and form; consciousness; volitional formations; ignorance; and the taints, consisting of sensuality, existence, and ignorance. These realizations lead to the realization of the Eightfold Path. Twelve of these, starting with ageing and death and ending with ignorance, correspond to the twelve links in the chain of cause and effect. These include three of the four nutriments.

The Five Aggregates

The Buddha says that his enlightenment arose out of a state of direct knowledge or gnosis based on the realization of the Five Aggregates. The chain of cause and effect, the general principle of interconnectedness, resolves itself into twelve links. The links consist of ignorance, volitional formations, consciousness, mind and matter (name and form), the six senses, contact, feeling, desire, attachment, becoming, birth, and ageing and dying. The Five Aggregates are a subset of this

list. They consist of volitional formations, consciousness, form, perception, contact-feeling, and attachment. The latter is applied to the previous five, all rooted in desire. Thus, the Five Aggregates constitute a subset of the links, but in a different order. Perhaps the Aggregates preceded the links as an early version of the latter.

One must understand all these factors in dynamic process terms, rather than as objective elements or "things." It is hard to convey this concept in English, due to the linguistic distinction between verbs (actions) and nouns (things). The closest one can come in English is the use of the process-participle, indicated by the suffix "ing." Although presented in linear order, the doctrine of interconnectedness connects all the links. Therefore, they are not truly linear – the links are all aspects of a singular, aggregate, and universal process, all aspects of which condition and connect to each other. The Buddha compares this to a "hairball." Thus, they are ultimately inseparable.

The Buddha states that the Five Aggregates are rooted in desire, the craving that constitutes the eighth link of the twelvefold chain of cause and effect. He emphasizes, through desire or intention, that one can profoundly influence the state of one's future rebirths. The idea of self arises from attachment to the Five Aggregates. Non-attachment to the Five Aggregates based on the realization of their essential nature, results in non-identification with them. In this way, the realization of 'not-self,' the third characteristic of existence, arises. Another basis for the arising of the realization of not-self is the inability to control form. If form were self, then form would be amenable to change based on volition. However, this is not the case. So for the remaining aggregates. In other words, one experiences oneself as subject to the Five Aggregates. The fact that the aggregates are not subject to volition proves that the Five Aggregates are not a self.

A further subset of the Five Aggregates includes eye, form, eye-consciousness, eye-contact, and so for the remaining

senses. The senses, the sensations, and the sensed altogether constitute 'the all.' Feeling, perception, and cause/effect, are the essential core set. The Buddha says that one cannot overcome suffering without detachment from and renunciation of the All. In a famous simile, the Buddha says that the All is burning with lust, hatred, delusion, birth, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair. Detachment liberates the mind and destroys rebirth; one has lived the spiritual life; there are no more rebirths through liberation from the taints by non-attachment. Detachment is the result of realizing the essential truth of change. In this way, one sees that the immediate causes of liberation are ultimately reducible to the realization of wisdom or insight, i.e., the realization or recognition of the true nature of beings. Ananda declares the world empty. The Mahayana further developed the ontological realization of emptiness, culminating in Dzogchen. The Buddha affirms Ananda's insight. He declares that the world, consciousness, and the rest are empty of self. Nothing worldly is or can be self.

Samsara

The Buddha compares form to a bubble, a mirage, the coil of a banana tree, or to a magical illusion. The Buddha refers to the magician who creates the illusion of the world as doing so at a crossroads. The shamanic practice of meeting at a crossroads is a universal archetype. In India, the god Bhairava, a wrathful form of Shiva, guards the crossroads outside villages. Stone phalluses and statues of Bhairava's watchful eyes represent him as a guardian of the boundaries. The Buddha recognizes form as inherently void, hollow, and insubstantial. It is remarkable that quantum physics explains the underlying subatomic structure of matter as quantum "froth." It is as though one were to investigate the intricate structures of the froth of a wave breaking on the shore. It exists for an instant and then is gone. However, if one looks at it closely and quickly enough, it contains worlds within worlds. Through this understanding, one is liberated.

We have referred to the world, the cycles of change, commonly translated as 'existence,' as a mirage. The Theravadin claim that the Buddha did not talk about the transdual, despite explicit references to duality and its transcendence all through the Pali Canon. The Buddha says of the world,

This world … for the most part depends in a duality – in the idea of existence and in the idea of nonexistence. But for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no idea of nonexistence with respect to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no idea of existence in regard to the world. … 'All exists': … this is one extreme. 'All does not exist': this is the second extreme. Without veering toward either of these extremes, the Tathagata teaches the dhamma by the middle.

Similarly, in the Udana the Buddha says,

There is, bhikkhus, that base where there is no earth, no water, no fire, no air; no base consisting of the infinity of space, no base consisting of the infinity of consciousness, no base consisting of nothingness, no base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; neither this world nor another world or both; neither sun nor moon. Here, bhikkhus, I say there is no coming, no going, no staying, no deceasing, no uprising. Not fixed, not movable, it has no support. Just this is the end of suffering. (Ud. 8.1)

Compare,

Here, Bahiya, you should train yourself thus: "In the seen will be merely what is seen; in the heard will be merely what is heard; in the sensed will be merely what is sensed; in the cognized will be merely what is cognized." In this way you should train yourself, Bahiya. "When, Bahiya, for you what is seen is merely what is seen … in the cognized is merely what is cognized, then, Bahiya, you will not be 'with that.' When, Bahiya, you are not 'with that,' then, Bahiya, you will not be 'in that,' When, Bahiya, you are not 'in

that,' then, Bahiya, you will be neither here nor beyond nor in between the two. Just this is the end of suffering." (Ud. 1.10)

These passages and others suggest that the Buddha taught non-duality (with apologies to Bhikkhu Bodhi; see "Dhamma and Non-duality," Access to Insight, 2011, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_27.html).

These passages imply the Mahayana doctrine of the two truths: relative and absolute. Therefore, to describe the world simply as illusory is oversimplified. Illusions do not simply "not exist." Even if the world is illusory from the perspective of the absolute, or reality itself, it is nevertheless experienced and therefore in the sense in which it is experienced, from the perspective of the relative. The Buddha's discussion of causality in the context of emancipation "with residue" confirms this view.

I prefer the metaphor of a mirage – a metaphor that the Buddha also used – to that of an illusion. From the latter, one may infer, absurdly, that the world is not grounded in reality. It becomes appropriate to inquire into how the world comes about in the context of the absolute, i.e., what is the ontological function of the world? The world must fulfil some function in relation to reality. The Buddha says in the face of the doctrine of change that the Four Truths are actual, unerring, and invariable. However, the doctrine of change itself is relative. The "absolute" truth of the world is also relative from the perspective of the absolute since the experience of emancipation transcends suffering.

The Nirvana Element

The Buddha refers to emancipation as the non-disintegrating, the non-manifest, the non-proliferated, the deathless, and the non-conditioned. He explicitly alludes to the ontological character of emancipation as absolute reality. The Buddha says, "There is, monks, an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned. If, monks, there were no unborn,

unbecome, unmade, unconditioned, no escape would be discerned from what is born, become, made, conditioned. But because there is an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned, therefore an escape is discerned from what is born, become, made, conditioned."

People think of emancipation as singular. I have alluded to the view of Hanshan that there are two emancipations – one imperfect, one perfect. I have also referred to the emancipation of the Buddha's enlightenment and the emancipation associated with the Buddha's passing. The Buddha himself identifies two emancipations – one "with residue," and one without. The "residue" referred to is karma. One inherits causal residue from the past. Therefore, it does not seem that the realization of emancipation necessarily destroys all past cause/effects. The arhant who has attained emancipation with residue still experiences pleasure and pain. Final knowledge in his passing completely liberates the arhant without residue. Presumably, an arhant who attains emancipation with no causal residue will die immediately in his awakening. Arhantship is a state of perfect liberation and transcendence in which there is no experience of pleasure and pain. A bodhisattva, then, at least potentially, is an arhant with residue, the residue in this case being the karma of loving-kindness.

Karma

The common view of moral causality is that causality is the product of action. However, this is simplistic. It is more like the Jain than the Buddhist view. The Buddha says, "what one intends and what one plans and whatever one has a tendency toward: this becomes a basis for the continuance of consciousness. … But … when one does not intend and does not plan and does not have a tendency toward anything, no basis exists for the continuation of consciousness." Non-intentionality is the true meaning of Buddhist detachment. Similarly, Jesus said, "You shall not be concerned about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be concerned for itself."

Intention and not action is the essential causal factor. Once one realizes this fully, one realizes that all rules, observances, social and ethical norms, beliefs, rituals, and practices are mere skilful means. Skilful means are not at all like the imperious absolutes that have been the bane of so many religions, Buddhism included. However, this does not mean that one becomes passive. Rather, undertake any actions without attachment which and are therefore non-intentional, not unlike the teachings of Laozi. The evidence for this is the life of the Buddha himself.

The Universal View

Some might think that the Buddha taught the entirety of the spiritual life. Therefore, there is nothing concerning the spiritual life that he did not teach. However, the Buddha, as the most recent buddha, was also the shortest-lived. He taught during the most degenerate age, when the lifespan of human beings is only 120 years. They cite for this view the statement of the Buddha that he held nothing back, holding nothing in secret. However, the Buddha directly contradicts this notion when he says, "the things that I have directly known but have not taught you are numerous, while the things I have taught you are few." He compares the things that he has taught to a handful of leaves in relation to the leaves of the simsapa tree. The simsapa was probably rosewood, the leaves of which are very numerous. It is more correct to say that the Buddha taught what is fundamental or essential to the spiritual life. He did not teach it all. This is consistent with our view that the Buddha taught the perennial philosophy. The perennial or primordial philosophy comprises the totality of the spiritual life. In other words, the Buddha limited what he taught to the limitations of his students in this degenerate age. It follows, therefore, that the horizons of the spiritual life should open before one as one progresses, rather than being limited to what the Buddha did and said. The fundamentalist view limits the spiritual life and is therefore false.

When the Buddha says that he avoids speculation, he is not saying that the subject matter of speculation is empty of meaning. Rather, the Tathagata has experienced the truth of it all. For this reason, he avoids speculation. In its totality the teaching transcends the comprehension of his (unenlightened) audience and still does.

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The Phenomenology of the Path

The Buddha distinguished four fundamental degrees of spiritual attainment: stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arhantship. To these he added the practices leading to the realization of these fruits, a clear reference to moral causality and its effects. The stream is a metaphor the Buddha used for both the Eightfold Path and the world. The implication is that there is a relation or correlation between the four realizations and the eight steps of the path. Nevertheless, the exact relationship is subtle.

Stream-entry is, as the word suggests, the attainment of the path itself. As such, it is the fundamental attainment. The stream-enterer is one who, having attained the path, has overcome the fetters of belief in the reality of a self, doubt, and attachment to rites and rituals. Expressed in positive terms, he has achieved selflessness, certainty, and non-attachment to actions. This person has achieved the dharma-eye.

The stream-enterer has achieved a "taste" of emancipation that results in a decisive awakening. This realization is the "breakthrough to the dharma." This state is identical with the state of the disciple, the spiritual order, and Perfect View. A stream-enterer cannot be reborn as an animal, ghost, or hell-being.

According to the tradition, a stream-enterer will attain full, final, and complete enlightenment within no more than seven rebirths, say, 700 years give or take.

Concerning this attainment, the Buddha said, taking up a bit of soil under his fingernail, "for a noble disciple, a person accomplished in view who has made the breakthrough, the suffering that has been destroyed and eliminated is more, while what remains is trifling. The latter does not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part of the former mass of suffering that has been destroyed and eliminated, since there is a maximum of seven more lives. Of such great benefit … is the breakthrough to the Dharma, of such great benefit is it to obtain the vision of the Dharma."

One may compare the term "breakthrough" with Padmasambhava's concept of the "leap." It implies that the attainment of stream-entry is a singular, momentary, even visionary experience. As we have already discussed, a stream-enterer is not necessarily a monastic or even celibate. Therefore, the "noble order" is not identical with the monastic order, as pointed out by Dr. Peter Masefield. The four factors for attaining stream-entry consist of associating with superior people, hearing the true teaching, clear awareness, and practising the teaching. A stream-enterer experiences an instantaneous transformation of being, an awakening characterized by directly knowing and seeing the truth.

The second developmental attainment is that of once-returner. In addition to the three fetters already mentioned, he has significantly, but not completely, weakened attachment and anger. As the name implies, the once-returner will experience only one more human rebirth. He will either be reborn as a divine being or attain emancipation. One can also attain this stage without embracing celibacy. Thus, this stage is available to a householder.

The third developmental attainment is that of non-returner. The non-returner has completely overcome all the

foregoing fetters. In addition to the previous attainments, he has achieved indifference to sensual pleasures and perfect benevolence or loving-kindness. Non-returners are never reborn as human beings. They are reborn directly in one of the Five Pure Abodes of the Form World. From there they attain full enlightenment.

Therefore, neither a bodhisattva nor a future Buddha has ever achieved this stage, because, had they done so, they could never be reborn as a human being. This is one more confirmation of the difference between a bodhisattva and an arhant. Because he completely overcomes the fetter of attachment, a non-returner must be celibate. Still, he is not necessarily a monastic. The discourses represent this stage as an ideal stage for the laity to aspire to. The attainment of the stage of non-returner is equivalent to the attainment of the first meditative attainment.

Finally, the fourth developmental attainment is that of arhant. The arhant has overcome all the previous fetters plus five additional fetters, viz., desire for rebirth in any state, the ego-conceit, restlessness or agitation, and, finally, ignorance, the root of the chain of cause and effect. Thus, the arhant adds complete detachment, selflessness, tranquility, and wisdom to the attainment of the previous stages. In the Mahayana classification, this is the equivalent to the eighth stage of a bodhisattva.

According to tradition, a householder cannot remain in the state of arhantship. Either he will attain arhantship at death or he will become a monastic immediately in achieving arhantship, due to this complete loss of interest in the world. Strictly speaking, therefore, all arhants are monastics, at least after the fact. This is not true of the previous stages. Thus, the common identification of the noble order with monasticism represents a conceptual confusion.

The arhant has also perfected the five faculties of faith, energy, clear awareness, concentration, and wisdom. According to the Buddha, an arhant is incapable of nine actions: killing, stealing, sex, lying, sensuality, and wrong

actions based on desire, hatred, delusion, and fear. Even if powerful sensory experiences were to enter his range of perception, they will not perturb his mind at all.

One can see there is a kind of correspondence between these four stages and the Eightfold Path. The stream-enterer has attained Perfect View. All the stages have attained some step of the Path. However, beyond that a simple one-to-one correspondence is hard to find. The ten fetters have no direct correspondence with the Eightfold Path. However, the faculties of energy, clear awareness, and concentration, mastered by the arhant, suggest the final three steps of the Path, viz., Right Effort, Right Awareness, and Right Concentration. Wisdom is the specific attainment of the first step of the path, viz., Right View or, in other views, the goal. An arhant has perfected all these. The Buddha says these five faculties are implicit in all the stages, but to different degrees. In the outsider or worldling, they are completely lacking. However, this begs the question of the nature of the attainment of the stream-enterer, who has achieved Perfect View, overcome doubt, and attained certainty in the truth of the teaching.

Two stages that precede the stage of stream-enterer consist of faith followers and dharma followers. The latter is higher than the former. Faith and dharma followers are stages of intermediate development between an ordinary worldling and a stream-enterer. They consist of ordinary faith in the Buddha and wisdom, respectively. The Buddha says the faith follower will be reborn as a divine being in a spiritual world. Dharma followers will attain enlightenment after an unspecified number of rebirths. Both will attain stream-entry in their current life.

The wanderer Vacchagotta wonders whether the Buddha is the only one who has attained these states. The Buddha assures him others in the community have also attained them. He includes both male and female monastics, who have attained the highest stage of arhantship; celibate male and female lay followers, who have attained the third stage of

non-returning; and non-celibate male and female lay followers, who have attained the first and second stages of stream-entry and once-returning. Thus, the Buddha clearly makes no fundamental distinction between the genders. However, he does say non-celibate practitioners cannot proceed beyond the second stage of once-returning, for the very practical karmic reason that the non-celibate person still attaches to sensual desire and rebirth. Nevertheless, once-returning is still a very advanced state of spiritual development.

A bodhisattva or future Buddha cannot attain any of these states since they all imply non-rebirth as a human being at some point in the future. The Buddha says he has been reborn many times as a Bodhisattva over countless eons. Thus, the path of the arhant is not the only possible spiritual path, but only one possible path, viz., the path taught by the Buddha in 5th century BCE northeast India.

Seven Kinds of Person

According to another classification, the Buddha recognizes seven kinds of persons: the two-ways-liberated person, the wisdom-liberated person, the body-witness, one who has attained-to-view, the faith-liberated person, the dharma follower, and the faith follower. We have already discussed the concepts of liberation by wisdom and faith as well as the dharma and faith followers. We have also discussed tranquility ("quietude of the heart") meditation and insight ("intuition") meditation.

The practice of tranquility meditation results in the pacification of the physical body by means of the eight form and formless meditative attainments. The practice of insight meditation results in the pacification of the mental body through the destruction of the taints, viz., sensuality, lust for living, and ignorance, and the detachment induced by deeply understanding the nature of existence, especially change. Now this structure has been set up, one can see how these seven types of person fit in. As the name implies, one

liberated-both-ways has mastered both quietude and insight. The one liberated by wisdom has not mastered quietude, but he has mastered insight. Both types of practice are, the Buddha says, sufficient to attain arhantship. Nothing to do remains. Thus, there are different paths to the same goal, suited to different aspirants.

The body-witness has mastered quietude but has only partial detachment. One who has attained-to-view has not mastered quietude, but has partly developed detachment, as well as an intellectual understanding of the teaching. The one attained-by-faith has not mastered quietude but has partly developed detachment and he has developed complete faith in the Buddha. The dharma follower has not mastered quietude or detachment, but he accepts the teaching intellectually and has acquired the five faculties of an arhant, viz., faith, energy, clear awareness, concentration, and wisdom, but only somewhat. Finally, the faith follower has not mastered quietude or detachment but has complete faith in the Buddha and has somewhat developed the five faculties. All these types of human being can reach enlightenment in this life, but not necessarily without further cultivation.

When one considers these classifications, one sees how deeply karmic the Buddha's fundamental understanding is. Human beings are caught in a mirage, characterized by vast cycles of time and inevitable, infinitely proliferating causality, entropy and negentropy, driven by the real force of moral causality that is in turn actuated by intention based on ignorance and desirous attachment in an endless series of apparent existences that have no discernible beginning or end, characterized by selflessness, change, and suffering. However, human beings also have the innate capacity, through the quality of sentience, to "wake up," to see the reality of their existence. Through the perfection of non-intention resulting from the cultivation of insight and tranquility, one can nullify moral causality, resulting in emancipation from the mirage, and the attainment of perfect

wisdom and bliss in an ultimately immortal state that is beyond rational comprehension and transdual.

Non-intention itself is transdual, because it is not rooted in desire or revulsion, revulsion being just another sort of attachment. Non-intention is a state of perfect clarity of mind, without attachment to the dichotomies of thought, perception, or experience. The Buddhist path bases itself on the essential idea of universal and individual causation. Moral causality acts both as a glue and an energy that binds all together yet is essentially mysterious. Moral causality equates to volition in its primary, ignorant state. Moral causality is neither "good" nor "bad." The same force that binds us is also the force that frees us, as the Tantra, says, "One rises by that by which one falls." It is the essential dynamic of reality itself. Without this ultimate and essential dynamic, there would be neither becoming nor liberation, but simply the stasis of nothingness (in the ordinary sense).

Four Kinds of Persons

With respect to the goal, the Buddha further identifies four kinds of persons: those who attain emancipation through volitional exertion and those who attain it without volitional exertion, either during life or at death. Volitional exertion includes contemplating the unattractiveness of the body, change, perceiving the repulsiveness of food, discontent with the world, and strong awareness of death. This is the classical model of the renunciant or ascetic. Attaining emancipation without volitional exertion includes seclusion from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states and the mastery of tranquility meditation and the four meditative attainments. All these types of people must also cultivate the five powers of a trainee, viz., faith, shame, fear of wrongdoing, energy, and wisdom, and the five faculties of faith, energy, clear awareness, concentration, and wisdom.

The Eight Jhanas

One develops the renunciation of the five lower fetters, viz., self-view, doubt, attachment to rites and rituals, attachment, and anger, equivalent to the stage of the non-returner, by means of the four meditative attainments. One attains the first meditative attainment by giving up possessiveness, unwholesome states, and "tranquilizing the bodily inertia." It is a cognitive state associated with rapture, happiness, and seclusion. He experiences existence as changeable, suffering, and empty of self. He turns his mind to the "deathless element," emancipation, either experiencing the destruction of the taints or, if there is any attachment left, being reborn in the Pure Abodes. Thus, he experiences the stage of a non-returner.

With the subsiding of thought and examination, he experiences the second meditative attainment.

With the fading away of rapture, he experiences the third meditative attainment.

With the subsiding of pleasure and pain, he experiences the fourth meditative attainment. He experiences clear awareness and equanimity.

Upon the passing away of the perception of form and sensation, he realizes the first formless meditative attainment, called Infinite Space.

Upon transcending the perception of Infinite Space, he realizes Infinite Consciousness. This is the second formless meditative attainment.

Upon transcending Infinite Consciousness, he realizes Nothingness. This is the third formless meditative attainment.

Dying Consciously

The Buddha also taught the practice of yoga in conjunction with the process of dying. Dying consciously can be a powerful spiritual practice. When the lay follower Dighavu was dying, he asked his father, Jotika, to bring the Buddha. The Buddha came to Dighavu to offer him spiritual guidance.

Once the Buddha confirmed Dighavu was dying, he advised Dighavu to cultivate faith in the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Order. That the Buddha directed this advice to Dighavu's rebirth is clear because of the Buddha's recommendation that Dighavu resolve to cultivate the moral virtues – clearly not a recommendation that has much to do with someone who is in the final stages of life! These four factors are the standard list for stream-entry. The Buddha is clearly encouraging Dighavu to become a stream-enterer, either in this life or the next.

When Dighavu affirms he has already attained stream-entry, the Buddha recommends he cultivate six additional factors, viz., the progressive realization of change, suffering, selflessness, renunciation, "fading away," and cessation. Dighavu declares he has already mastered these meditations too. By means of these meditations, the Buddha declares that Dighavu has achieved the stage of non-returning. He has overcome the five fetters and been born in a spiritual world.

One can influence one's future rebirths through will or intention. It also suggests that the stage of dying itself is a valuable opportunity to develop the spiritual life. This view was greatly developed in the Tibetan system of the "transference of consciousness," based on the cultivation of the post-mortem state. It also shows, through the cultivation of the six things that partake of true knowledge, how one may overcome the five fetters and attain the state of a non-returner.

Once again, wisdom takes priority in the practice of cultivation.

Seven Factors of Enlightenment

The Buddha identifies seven factors of enlightenment attained by five kinds of non-returners, including one who attains arhantship early in this life, at death, in "the interval," "upon landing," without volitional exertion, with volitional exertion, or, finally, in the highest Pure Abode. This passage is exceptionally interesting, especially the references to

attaining arhantship "in the interval," "upon landing," and "becoming one bound upstream."

According to the orthodox Theravada interpretation, based on commentaries written hundreds of years later, these refer to emancipation attained at death, in rebirth as a divine being, or during one's lifespan in the Pure Abodes. This interpretation ignores both the meaning of the terms and the order. Even Bhikkhu Bodhi recognizes the artificiality of this interpretation on purely linguistic grounds. Both Bodhi and Dr. Peter Masefield take the obvious meaning of this passage, based also on the famous simile of the flaming chip in the Anguttara Nikaya (VII, 55), to refer to the current life, the moment of dying, the post-mortem state "in between" this life and the next rebirth, rebirth in the Pure Abodes, or finally during one's life after having passed through the Five Pure Abodes. With and without volitional exertion thus become the two modes of attainment that apply to subsequent rebirths.

Bodhi's interpretation is clearly the obvious meaning. However, it presents a grave problem for Theravadins. They deny the reality of an intermediate post-mortem state. Bhikkhu Bodhi's support for this interpretation is even more remarkable for this reason. As an aside, Bodhi himself does seem to have changed his allegiances somewhat. He has left Sri Lanka and taken up residence in the Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey. Bodhi Monastery is a Chinese Mahayana monastery with a strong basis in the Pali discourses, very much along the lines I have taken in these talks. Apparently, Bodhi himself now teaches the Mahayana interpretation of the discourses in his classes, in addition to the Theravada view. In addition to recognizing the reality of an intermediate post-mortem state, Bodhi refers to the superiority of the path of a bodhisattva.

The post-mortem state is described in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The yoga of conscious dying bases itself on the teachings of the "second Buddha," Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava recognized the reality of an intermediate

post-mortem state called the "interval" or "the in between." The Tibetan Book of the Dead develops an elaborate phenomenology and yoga of the intermediate state. The Tibetan Book of the Dead bases it on the vital significance of the moment of death. Finding this doctrine in the Pali Canon shows the degree to which the later Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions depend on a deep appreciation of the Pali discourses. The "interval" falls outside the ontological classification of the thirty-one planes of existence. Nevertheless, it is also a state from and within which one can attain emancipation. Tibetan Buddhism, Yogacara, and Pure Land seem to be the main schools that preserve this doctrine of the Pali tradition.

When the Venerable Khemaka is dying, he declares he has overcome the five aggregates subject to attachment, including ego-identification with the five aggregates, but he has not yet overcome the notion or conceit of a self. Thus, he makes a distinction between self and self-identity. Bodhi explains this as a residual conceit and desire associated with the "odour of subjectivity," based on the metaphor of the flower's scent, connected with the belief in personal identity. The self does not identify itself with any form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, or consciousness. I would explain it as an underlying belief in separation resulting from fundamental ignorance, still not overcome. Its root is the metaphysical underpinning of the delusion of self, detached from identification with objects but not from exclusive self-identity.

The exclusivity of a self is distinct from the idea of the mindstream. The mindstream is a "true self" not exclusive of anything and thus transdual. I regard the latter as the ontological underpinning of the illusory self still mired in ignorance. One can reconcile the doctrine of selflessness with the idea of a mindstream. It is necessary if one is to regard the world as a mirage and not merely a (nonexistent) "illusion." Even an illusion is ontological.

The Buddha and the Arhant

Non-attachment liberates both the Buddha and an arhant. Their essential identity raises the question of the difference between them. The Buddha is self-realized; the wisdom resulting from the teaching discovered and taught by the Buddha liberates the arhant. In other words, it is a matter of seniority. Thus, the Buddha says,

> *so long as a Tathagata has not arisen in the world, an Arhant, a Perfectly Enlightened One, for just so long there is no manifestation of great light and radiance, but then blinding darkness prevails, a dense mass of darkness; for just so long there is no explaining, teaching, proclaiming, establishing, disclosing, analyzing, or elucidating of the Four Noble Truths. But … when a Tathagata arises in the world, an Arhant, a Perfectly Enlightened One, then there is the manifestation of great light and radiance; then no blinding darkness prevails, no dense mass of darkness; then there is the explaining, teaching, proclaiming, establishing, disclosing, analyzing, and elucidating of the Four Noble Truths.*

In other words, time and history are intrinsically entropic, whereas the power of the truth of the teaching is inherently negentropic.

The Buddha identifies ten powers of the arhant and ten powers of the Buddha.

Comparison of the Powers of an Arhant and a Buddha

Ten Powers of an Arhant	Ten Powers of a Buddha
Impermanence	Possibility and impossibility
Craving and suffering	Results of actions
Seclusion and renunciation	Ways leading everywhere
Four establishments of mindfulness	Elements of the world
Four perfect kinds of striving	Inclinations of beings
Four bases of spiritual power	Disposition of beings

Five spiritual faculties	Process of emancipation and attainment
Five powers of an aspirant	Recalling past lives
Seven factors of enlightenment	Divine eye (karmic destinations)
Supermundane Eightfold Path	Emancipation (destruction of the taints)

Four establishments of awareness: contemplating the body, contemplating feelings, contemplating mind, contemplating phenomena

Four perfect kinds of aspiration: non-arising, abandonment, arising, maintenance (right effort)

Four foundations of spiritual power: intention, effort, consciousness, investigation

Five spiritual faculties: faith, energy, awareness, concentration, wisdom

Five powers of an aspirant: faith, shame, fear of wrongdoing, energy, wisdom

Seven factors of enlightenment: awareness, discrimination, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, equanimity

Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right awareness, right concentration

There is a rough correspondence between these terms. Nonetheless, they are not simply identical or equivalent. An essential difference is that all the powers of an arhant are primarily mental powers or realizations pertaining to the attainment of emancipation. These include various realizations concerning the nature of existence (change, attachment, suffering, etc.). However, the ten powers of a Buddha are primarily ontological. A significant number of these powers are associated with moral causality, viz., knowing what is possible and impossible; causes and possibilities; the types of conduct and future destinies to which they lead, including emancipation; the inclinations and dispositions of beings, amounting to a kind of clairvoyance; recalling past lives; and seeing the causal destinies of beings (the so-called “divine eye”).

The emancipation of an arhant appears to be exclusive of the world. The emancipation of a Buddha includes all this plus a deep understanding of the world, and not only from the perspective of the absolute. In the Tibetan view, the Buddha continues to be involved with the world. For example, the great 8th century adept Padmasambhava, who is credited with the conversion of the Tibetan nation to Buddhism, is held to be an emanation of the historical Buddha and was enlightened at birth. I suspect this comes about because of the difference between the path of the four stages of an arhant compared with the path of a bodhisattva in relation to the world: i.e., the arhant renounces the world, whereas the bodhisattva chooses to remain involved with the world for a long time, for the sake of the salvation of all beings. Thus, the realization of an arhant excludes the world; a Buddha includes it in a way the arhant cannot, including what one can only call psychic powers. Rooted in the attainment of an arhant, the attainment of a Buddha transcends that of an arhant, not only in relation to time but also in terms of the quality of his realization of moral causality and the nature of experience. This is characterized by the perfect awakening, detachment, and integrity of a Tathagata, whose speech and actions are in perfect accord with each other and with reality itself. The attainment of a Tathagata is also much rarer than the attainment of an arhant by what one can only describe as an astronomical order of magnitude. Thus, the realization of a Buddha encompasses the realization of an arhant but the realization of an arhant does not encompass the realization of a Buddha.

THE FACES IN THE ROCKS

The faces in the rocks
Gaze at me
Intent.
They ask
Who are you?
Where have you come from?
We've been waiting here
Forever
At last you come
To our home.
Their rough faces
Twisted in the rocks
Each one individual
Each one a mystery
Each one holy
I wish I could know them
But they are mute
Only their faces speak truth
Archaic faces
Twisted by time
Lost in the creepers and the vines
By the river that murmurs
Beneath the city.
I wonder, who else has come here
To sit in silent witness
Beneath the flashing leaves
And the hum of the cicadas
In the ravine.
I invite others to see, but no one comes.
The city is too close, its busy-ness
Infinitely distracting.
But I return
Again and again
Because I realize that only I will come
To witness their testimony
It is a mission I have
And if I die
In this place

I wish
That I too may join their company
The stone faces that do not speak.
A lone bird sings its song

Appendix 1
The 31 Planes of Existence

Realms	**Worlds**	**Planes**	**Stages**	**Age**
Formless Realm		Neither perception nor non-perception	4th formless meditation	84,000 eons
		Nothingness	3rd formless meditation	60,000
		Infinite consciousness	2nd formless meditation	40,000
		Infinite space	1st formless meditation	20,000
Form Realm	Pure Abodes	Peerless devas	Non-returners	16,000
		Clear-sighted devas		8,000
		Beautiful devas	5 kinds of non-returners	4,000
		Untroubled devas		2,000
		Devas not falling away	Uddamsota	1,000

	Brihatphala World	Unconscious beings	4th form meditation	500
		Very fruitful		500
	Subhakritsna World	Refulgent glory	3rd form meditation	64
		Unbounded glory		32
		Limited glory		16
	Abhasvara World	Streaming radiance	2nd form meditation	8
		Unbounded radiance		4
		Limited radiance		2
	Brahma World	Great Brahmas	1st form meditation, metta meditation	1
		Brahma's ministers		0.5
		Brahma's retinue		0.3
Sense-Sphere Realm	Higher	Wielding power over others' creations		9.2 billion years
		Delighting in creation		2.3 b.y.
		Contented		576 million years
		Yama		144 m.y.
	Lower	33 gods		36 m.y.
		Four great kings		9 m.y.

	Human	Humanity		10–80,000 years
	States of deprivation	Animal		?
		Hungry ghosts		?
		Anti-gods		?
		Hell-beings		?

Note: The ambiguity concerning the length of an eon (kappa) makes a correlation of the sense-sphere realm with the formless and form realms uncertain. Wikipedia has 16,798,000 to 1.28 trillion years, depending on which type of eon is being referred to. Assuming that the latter is meant, this means that the maximum longevity of any being in samsara is 1.0752^{17} human years (approximately 1 billion billion years). Within our own world system, science and Buddhism concur that the maximum differential between the shortest and longest-lived organisms is roughly one billion times.

Appendix 2
Numbered Sets

Two Darts

- Bodily feeling
- Mental feeling

Two Kinds of Knowledge

- Principle
- Entailment

Two Kinds of Views

- Those who hold back
- Those who overreach

Two Nirvana Elements

- With residue
- Without residue

Two Things that Partake of True Knowledge

- Serenity
- Insight

Three Bases of Merit

- Giving
- Moral discipline

- Meditation

Three Divine Messengers

- An old man
- A sick man
- A corpse

Three Kinds of Existence

- Sense-sphere
- Form-sphere
- Formless sphere

Three Kinds of Righteous and Unrighteous Bodily Conduct

Righteous Bodily Conduct	*Unrighteous Bodily Conduct*
Not killing	Killing
Not stealing	Stealing
No sexual misconduct	Sexual misconduct

Three Kinds of Righteous and Unrighteous Mental Conduct

Righteous Mental Conduct	*Unrighteous Mental Conduct*
No covetousness	Covetousness
No ill will	Ill will
Perfect view	Wrong view

Three Kinds of Volitional Formations

- Body
- Speech
- Mind

Three Lights

- Sun

- Moon
- Fire

Three Marks of Existence

- Impermanence
- Suffering
- Non-self

Three Phases

- Knowledge of truth
- Knowledge of the task
- Knowledge that the task has been completed

Three Recollections

- Buddha
- Dhamma
- Sangha

Three Taints

- Sensual desire
- Existence
- Ignorance

Three Times

- Past
- Present
- Future

Three True Knowledges

- Recollection of past lives
- Passing away and rebirth of beings
- Destruction of the taints

Three Worlds

- Sense world
- Form world
- Formless world

Threefold Training

- Virtue
- Mind
- Wisdom

Four Analytical Knowledges

- Meaning
- Dhamma
- Language (definitive words)
- Courageous eloquence (confidence)

Four Assurances

- Heavenly bliss
- Worldly happiness
- Good kamma
- Self-purification

Four Bases of Power

- Will
- Energy
- Consciousness
- Discrimination

Four Classes of Noble Disciples

- Arahants
- Non-returners
- Once-returners
- Stream-winners

Four Divine Abodes

- Loving-kindness
- Compassion
- Altruistic joy
- Equanimity

Four Elements

- Earth
- Water
- Air (wind)
- Fire (heat)

Four Establishments of Mindfulness

- Body
- Feelings
- Mind
- Mind objects

Four Factors Leading to Stream-Entry

- Association with people of integrity
- Listening to the true dhamma
- Appropriate attention
- Dhamma practice

Four Form and Four Formless Meditations

Form Meditations	***Formless Meditations***
First jhana	Infinite Space
Second jhana	Infinite Consciousness
Third jhana	Nothingness
Fourth jhana	Neither Perception nor Non-perception

Four Great Kings

- Vessavana
- Virūlhaka
- Dhatarattha
- Virūpakkha

Four Grounds of Self-Confidence

- Enlightenment
- Destruction of the taints
- Non-obstruction
- Destruction of suffering

Four Kinds of Clinging

- Sensual pleasures
- Views
- Rules and observances
- Self

Four Kinds of Karma

- Dark kamma with dark results
- Bright kamma with bright results
- Dark and bright kamma with dark and bright results
- Dark and bright kamma with neither dark nor bright results

Four Kinds of Nutriment

- Food
- Contact
- Volition
- Consciousness

Four Kinds of Persons

- Those who attain nibbana with volitional exertion

    - During life
    - At death
- Those who attain nibbana without volitional exertion
    - During life
    - At death

Four Kinds of Righteous and Unrighteous Verbal Conduct

Righteous Conduct	*Unrighteous Conduct*
No false speech	False speech
No malicious speech	Malicious speech
No harsh speech	Harsh speech
No idle chatter	Idle chatter

Four Perfect Kinds of Striving

- Non-arising of unskilful states
- Abandoning of unskilful states
- Arising of skilful states
- Sustaining of skilful states

Four Phases

- Aggregate
- Origin
- Cessation
- Way to cessation

Four Supermundane Truths

- Suffering
- Cause of suffering
- Cessation of suffering
- Supermundane Eightfold Path

Four Ways to Arhantship

- Samatha followed by vipassana
- Vipassana followed by samatha

- Alternating samatha and vipassana
- Spiritual anxiety

Four Wonderful Things

- Love
- Compassion
- Joy
- Equanimity

Five Complexes

- Form
- Sensation
- Perception
- Mental formations
- Consciousness

Five Cords of Sensual Pleasure

- Forms
- Sounds
- Odours
- Flavours
- Tangibles

Five Faculties (Powers)

- Faith
- Energy
- Mindfulness
- Concentration
- Wisdom

Five Hindrances

- Sensory desire
- Ill-will
- Sloth-torpor

- Restlessness-worry
- Doubt

Five Kinds of Non-returners

- Attainer of nibbana during life
- Attainer of nibbana at death
- Attainer of nibbana in the intermediate state
- Attainer of nibbana in landing (rebirth)
- Attainer of nibbana in the Pure Abodes

Five Lower Fetters

- Identity view
- Doubt
- Ritual attachment
- Sensual desire
- Ill will

Five Powers of a Trainee

- Faith
- Shame
- Fear
- Effort
- Wisdom

Five Precepts

- Not killing
- Not stealing
- No sexual misconduct
- No drunkenness
- No wrong speech

Five Prohibited Trades

- Weapons
- Slaves

- Flesh
- Alcohol
- Poison

Five Recollections

- Buddha
- Dhamma
- Sangha
- Virtue
- Dewa virtues

Six Elements

- Earth
- Wind
- Fire
- Water
- Space
- Consciousness

Six Internal and External Sense Bases (Faculties)

Internal Sense Bases	***External Sense Bases***
Eye	Forms
Ear	Sounds
Nose	Odours
Tongue	Flavours
Skin	Tactile objects
Mind	Mental phenomena

The Internal Sense Bases also appear as the Six Classes of Contact. The External Sense Bases also appear as the Six Classes of Craving.

Six Principles of Cordiality

Loving-kindness	***Commonality***
Bodily	Property

Verbal	Virtue
Mental	View

Six Recollections

- Buddha
- Dhamma
- Sangha
- Generosity
- Virtue
- Devas

Six Roots of Dispute

- Anger and resentment
- Contempt and insolence
- Envy and niggardliness
- Deceit and fraud
- Evil wishes and wrong view
- Own-view

Six Things that Partake of True Knowledge

- Impermanence
- Suffering
- Non-self
- Abandonment
- Fading away
- Cessation

Six Unsurpassed Things

- Seeing the Tathagata or his disciple
- Hearing the dhamma from the Tathagata or his disciple
- Gaining faith in the Tathagata or his disciple
- Training in the higher virtue, higher mind, and higher wisdom
- Service to the Tathagata or his disciple
- Recollection of the Tathagata or his disciple

Seven Factors of Enlightenment

- Mindfulness
- Discrimination
- Energy
- Rapture
- Tranquility
- Concentration
- Equanimity

Seven Good Qualities

- Four Foundations of Mindfulness
- Four Perfect Efforts
- Four Constituents of Psychic Power
- Five Faculties
- Five Powers
- Seven Factors of Enlightenment
- Supermundane Eightfold Path

Seven Kinds of Supermundane Persons

- Faith devotee
- Faith-liberated one
- Body witness
- One liberated two ways
- Truth devotee
- One attained to understanding
- Wisdom-liberated one

Seven Precious Treasures (Gems)

- Precious Queen
- Precious General
- Precious Jewel
- Precious Minister
- Precious Elephant
- Precious Wheel

Seven Principles of Social Stability

Civil Society	*Sangha*
Assembly	Assembly
Harmony	Harmony
Tradition	Authority
Seniority	Seniority
Freedom of women	Detachment
Spirituality	Seclusion
Sangha	Mindfulness

Eight Causes and Conditions of Wisdom

- Teacher
- Instruction
- Withdrawal of body and mind
- Virtue
- Penetration by view
- Energy
- Noble silence
- Contemplating the Five Aggregates

Eight Persons Worthy of Gifts

- Stream-enterer
- One who has entered the course for the realization of the fruit of stream-entry
- Once-returner
- One who has entered the course for the realization of the fruit of once returning
- Non-returner
- One who has entered the course for the realization of the fruit of non-returning
- Arahant
- One who has entered the course for the realization of the fruit of arahantship

Eight Worldly Conditions

Gain	*Loss*
Praise	Blame
Fame	Disrepute
Pleasure	Sorrow

Eightfold Path

Supermundane Eightfold Path	*Wrongful Eightfold Path*
Perfect View	Wrong View
Perfect Intention	Wrong Intention
Perfect Speech	Wrong Speech
Perfect Action	Wrong Action
Perfect Livelihood	Wrong Livelihood
Perfect Energy	Wrong Energy
Perfect Mindfulness	Wrong Mindfulness
Perfect Concentration	Wrong Concentration

Nine Actions an Arhant Is Incapable Of

- Store up possessions
- Intentionally kill any form of life
- Steal
- Perform sexual intercourse
- Tell a deliberate lie
- Act improperly out of desire
- Act improperly out of ill-will
- Act improperly out of delusion
- Act improperly out of fear

Nine Charnel Ground Contemplations

- Bloated corpse
- Partly eaten corpse
- Skeleton with flesh and blood
- Fleshless skeleton smeared with blood
- Scattered bones

- Whitened bones
- Piled up bones
- Powdered bones

Ten Courses of Wholesome and Unwholesome Actions

Wholesome Actions	*Unwholesome Actions*
Not killing	Killing
Not stealing	Stealing
No sexual misconduct	Sexual misconduct
No false speech	False speech
No malicious speech	Malicious speech
No harsh speech	Harsh speech
No idle chatter	Idle chatter
No covetousness	Covetousness
No ill will	Ill will
Right view	Wrong view

Ten Factors

- Noble Eightfold Path +
- Right knowledge
- Right liberation

Ten Fetters

Lower

- Personality belief
- Skeptical doubt
- Wrongful adherence to rites, rituals, and ceremonies
- Sensual desire
- Ill will

Higher

- Attachment to the form states
- Attachment to the formless states

- Measuring
- Restlessness
- Ignorance

Ten Perfections

- Generosity
- Morality
- Renunciation
- Wisdom
- Energy
- Patience
- Truthfulness
- Resolution
- Loving-kindness
- Equanimity

Ten Powers of an Arhant and a Tathagata

Ten Powers of an Arhant	***Ten Powers of a Buddha***
Impermanence	Possibility and impossibility
Craving and suffering	Results of actions
Seclusion and renunciation	Ways leading everywhere
Four establishments of mindfulness	Elements of the world
Four perfect kinds of striving	Inclinations of beings
Four bases of spiritual power	Dispositions of beings
Five spiritual faculties	Process of emancipation and attainment
Five powers of a trainee	Recalling past lives
Seven factors of enlightenment	Divine eye (karmic destinations)
Supermundane Eightfold Path	Emancipation (destruction of the taints)

Ten Recollections

- Buddha

- Dhamma
- Sangha
- Generosity
- Virtue
- Dewa virtues
- Death
- Body
- Breath
- Peace

Glossary

Ādicchabandhu	Kinsman of the sun
Ājīva	Livelihood, living, subsistence
Akusala	Unwholesome, ethically unskilful, corrupt
Anattā	Non-self-identity, non-egoity
Anicca	Impermanence, change
Arahant	Worthy or venerable one (arhant)
Ariyan	Supermundane
Ariyasangha	Noble order
Āsava	Taint, outflow, influx
Atta	Soul-self (atman)
Avijjā	Unconsciousness, not knowing (ignorance)
Āyatana	Region, sphere, locus, place, process, cognitive sphere
Bhakti (Skt.)	Love, devotion, worship
Bhava	Rebirth, being alive
Bkikkhu	Male monastic (monk)
Bhikkhunī	Female monastic (nun)
Dāsī	Female slave
Deva	Luminous or celestial being
Dhamma	Cosmic order, truth, phenomena
Dhammābhisamaya	Absolute penetration of dhamma
Dhammacakkhu	Dharma-vision, dharma-eye
Ditthi	View, doctrine, philosophy; also, belief, dogma, speculation
Dukkha	Suffering, angst, ennui, unsatisfactoriness
Ekabījin	One-seeder

Ekāyana	Universal vehicle, single vehicle, "the way"
Evan me sutan	"Thus have I heard"
Iddhi	Mental powers
Jāti	Rebirth
Jarāmarana	Dying
Jhāna	Meditative state, attainment, accomplishment (gnosis)
Kappa	Eon, world-age (kalpa)
Kāma	Sensuality
Kamma	Causality (karma)
Kammanta	Doing, acting, working
Khanda	Complex, aggregation
Kusala	Meritorious, upright, correct
Mappō (Jap.)	Degenerate age
Mettā	Loving-kindness
Nāgī	Tree-spirit, female serpent deity
Nāmarūpa	Body-mind, psychophysical
Nibbāna	Emancipation (nirvana)
Nidana	Cause, link
Nirodha	Cessation, quenching, extinction (of suffering)
Pabhassara citta	Pure, bright mind
Panna	Wisdom, insight, discriminative knowing
Pansil	Five ethical precepts
Parinibbāna	Final, complete, ultimate nirvana, nirvana without residue or remainder
Paticcasamuppāda	Chain of cause and effect
Phassa	Contact, sensory contact
Phowa (Tib.)	Dying consciously
Pranayama (Skt.)	Breath-control
Punna	Merit
Puthujjana	Worldling, common person
Raja yoga (Skt.)	Royal yoga, yoga of power
Rūpa	Form

Sabba	Whole, entire, the all, everything
Sahasrāra (Skt.)	The energy centre (chakra) located above the head, represented as a 1,000- petalled flower
Sakadāgāmin	Once-returner
Salāyatana	Six apperceptions
Samādhi	Concentration, meditation, lucidity, self-consciousness
Samana	Ascetic, renunciant
Samatha	Calm, tranquility, quietude
Sammā	Perfect, right(eous)
Sammā-ājīva	Perfect living
Sangha	Order
Sangkrānti	*See Phowa*
Sansāra	Rebirth, phenomenality, time (samsara)
Santāna (Skt.)	Mind-stream, individual karmic continuity
Sankappa	Meaning, thought, intention, purpose, plan
Sankhāra	Volitional formation, karmic potentiality
Sannā	Perception
Sati	Memory, recognition, attentive awareness
Satyāgraha (Skt.)	Power of truth
Sāvaka	Hearer, listener
Sekha	Seeker, aspirant, initiate
Sīla	Character, moral behaviour
Sotāpanna	Stream-enterer, stream-winner
Sutta	Story, account, report (sutra)
Tadāyatanan	"This base"; *see Āyatana*
Tanhā	Desirous attachment
Tathāgata	Thus come, thus gone
Tapas (Skt., Pali *tapa*)	Heat, fire, light, asceticism
Tathāgatagarbha (Skt.)	Buddha-potential, Buddha-nature

Tulku (Tib.)	"Incarnation body"
Upādāna	Grasping, attachment, fuel
Upāya	Relative or skilful method
Uposatha	Lunar quarter day
Vācā	Voice, word, saying, speech
Vāyāma	Striving, effort, exertion, endeavour
Vedanā	Feeling faculty
Vinaya	Discipline, training, monastic code, ethical restraint
Vipassanā	Insight, intuition
Vinnana	Mentation
Yāna	Going, proceeding, vehicle

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By the merit of these talks may all obtain omniscience. May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing. From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death, from the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.

Om Ah Hum Vajra Guru Padma Siddhi Hum

"The sacred speech of indestructible mind is the lotus teacher's spiritual power, wisdom, and compassion."

About the Author

Alexander Duncan (born April 9, 1954) is a Buddhist blogger and published writer, including books on Buddhist philosophy and poetry, and a political blogger. Born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada to Carole Watkin, a ballet dancer, he was raised in King City, Ontario. In grade 4, he developed a keen interest in mysticism and magic. Over the years he undertook an extensive comparative study of all of the major spiritual, religious, mystical, and magical traditions of humanity, including magic, astrology, the Western esoteric tradition, Cabala, Gnosticism, Sufism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, shamanism, Tantra, and Vodun. He also studied the works of C.G. Jung, W.Y. Evans Wentz, Julius Evola, Mircea Eliade, and others. He graduated from York University with an Honours B.A. in English in 1978. He has published five books of Buddhist interest. He is noted for his original, radically insightful, and universal, non-sectarian interpretation of Buddhist philosophy in which he relates Buddhist philosophy to contemporary Western philosophy, science, and global politics from an esoteric perspective. Alexander's blog, www.palisuttas.com, is read in 182 countries.